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MILTON.

Engraved by Caroline Watson, 1808.

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Laughner

THE
CABINET
OF
POETRY,

CONTAINING

THE BEST ENTIRE PIECES TO BE FOUND IN

THE WORKS

OF

THE BRITISH POETS.

> "If the grain were separated from the chaff which fills the
> "works of our National Poets, what is truly valuable
> "would be to what is useless in the proportion of a mole-
> "hill to a mountain."—BURKE.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Poets at large, like the Statutes at large, are proverbial for the useless lumber which they contain, and have long been a heavy tax on the purse and the patience of the Public.

The present Work is compiled on the principle of rejecting all the worthless and uninteresting parts of their compositions, and retaining only the best and most exquisite pieces. It is in regard to the mass of English Poetry, strictly A CABINET OF GEMS; and though it may not include every poem which, according to various opinions, might properly appear in such a Selection, no articles will be found in it which do not possess unquestionable beauty, and afford adequate specimens of the peculiar genius and manner of their respective Authors.

London,
February 12, 1808.

ESSAY ON POETRY.

CHAPTER I.

Definition and general Characteristic.

POETRY, or Poesy, (which latter word, as more musical, and nearer to the original, deserves to have the preference,) derives its name from the Greek noun Ποιησις, formed from a verb signifying to make, to image, or to create; and indeed imagery and invention are the grand characteristics of poetry.

Poetry is generally defined to be *the* ART *of composing, so as to delight, in* VERSE.

This definition seems to agree with the form, the matter, the means, and the end: and it will apply to good poetry of every kind. There is however one strong objection to it; as some works of transcendant excellence of invention and imagination, are *not poetry* according to this definition.

Aristotle makes the essence of poetry consist in imitation: at the beginning of his Poetics, he describes music, dancing, and poetry, as imitative arts. Horace requires the poet to make his language a copy of life: *respicere exemplare vitæ.*

Among modern critics, Vossius defines poetry to be the art of representing actions in metre; Batteaux, in his Belles Lettres, calls poetry the imitation of elegant nature; and Trapp, in his Lectures on Poetry, gives, upon the same principle, this laboured definition: "Poetry is the art of imitating or illustrating, in metrical numbers, every being in nature, and every object of the imagination, for the delight and improvement of mankind." Without dwelling upon the obvious objection to this definition, that the term *imitation* is improperly used to express the description of objects by arbitrary signs, which exhibit no copy of nature; if the definition be admitted, it must evidently comprehend all verbal delineations of nature, whether in verse or prose. A prose-comedy is at least as perfect an imitation of nature, as a tragedy in verse; and a well written novel is as accurate a copy of nature, as an epic poem.

Other critics have chosen to derive their definition of poetry from its *end*; though they have by no means agreed, whether that end be principally to instruct or to please. Racine, and others, have held, that the primary object of poetry is instruction; and in support of this opinion they have remarked, that, in ancient times, poetry was employed as an auxiliary to promote the influence of religion and virtue. Dr. Hurd, a critic of great refinement and classical taste, has, on the contrary, taken much pains to prove that the first object of poetry is to please, and that this is the only kind of literary composition in which use is subordinate to pleasure; and he has hence deduced a definition of poetry, considered as an art, describing it to be "such a way, or method, of treating a subject, as is found most pleasing and delightful to us."

A definition of poetry, similar to that of bishop Hurd, is given by Johnson. "Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason." "The true poet," he adds, "enables you to feel what you remember to have felt before, and to feel it with a great increase of sensibility: you recognize a familiar image, but meet it again amplified and expanded, embellished with beauty, and enlarged with majesty."

Those writers have perhaps approached nearest to a true definition of poetry, who have understood it to be the immediate offspring of a vigorous imagination and quick sensibility, and have called it the language of fancy and passion. This appears to have been the idea entertained of poetry by Plato, and to have furnished the chief ground of his exclusion of poets from his ideal republic. Cicero formed the same notion of poetry; and said, that "while all other accomplishments must be acquired by instruction and precept, the poet derives sufficient resources from himself, from the native vigour of his mind, and a certain divine impulse." His sentiment is adopted, among the moderns, by Dr. Blair. From this conception of poetry arise the terms *poetic enthu-*

siasm, and *poetic inspiration*. In the state of nature, before the art of versification was known, men must have felt strong passions, and expressed them strongly. Their language would be bold and figurative; it would be vehement and abrupt: sometimes, under the impulse of the gentle and tender, or the gay and joyous passions, it would flow in a kind of wild and unfettered melody; for, under such feelings, melody is natural to man. These first expressions of passion and sentiment would be poetry, but they would not assume the regular form of verse. So artificial an invention must have been the result of innumerable efforts, and could not attain any high degree of perfection but in a period of great refinement. "No one can doubt," says Quintilian, "that poetry, at first, flowed without art; and that it was reduced to metre after the ear had discovered, by frequent observation, the regular intervals of melodious sounds."

If the several excellences of poetry be distinctly examined, it will be found that, except measured harmony, none of these are excluded from prose.

The character of poetry, which may seem most to require that it be limited to verse, is its appropriate diction. It will be admitted, that metaphorical language, being more impressive than general terms, is best suited to poetry. That excited state of mind, which poetry supposes, naturally prompts a figurative style. But the language of fancy, sentiment, and passion, is not peculiar to verse. Whatever is the natural and proper expression of any conception or feeling in metre, or rhyme, is its natural and proper expression in prose. All beyond this is a departure from the true principles of taste. If the artificial diction of modern poetry would be improper, on similar occasions, in prose, it is equally improper in verse. In support of this opinion, an appeal may be made, not only to the general sense of propriety, but to those most perfect models of fine writing, the Greek poets. The language of these great masters is always so consonant to nature, that, if thrown out of rhythm (or metre), it would become the proper expression of the same sentiment in prose. If modern poetry will seldom bear to be brought to such a test, it is because the taste of the moderns has been refined to a degree of fastidiousness, which leads them to prefer the unsolid ornaments of art, to the genuine simplicity of nature.

Horace gives the honourable appellation of poet, not to the mere versifier, but to the man who possesses the divine inspiration of genius, and can command a suitable grandeur of expression:

> Ingenium cui sit, cui mens divinior, atque os
> Magna sonaturum, des nominis hujus honorem.

And to prevent misapprehension, he gives an example of a passage from Ennius, in which, when the verse is broken up (that is, when the passage becomes prose), the reader still finds the limbs of the disjointed poet: *disjecta membra poetæ.*

In limiting the name of poet to the composer of verses, it has not been sufficiently perceived, that all the essential and most valuable powers of poetry may be found in a writer who does not understand, or is unwilling to submit to the mental fatigue of practising, the art of versification. It is not my design to depreciate this art. Though it may not, in these degenerate times, be able to perform all the wonders recorded of Orpheus's lyre, it can still add an irresistible charm to the works of fancy. Verse is certainly the fairest dress of poetry; and when true genius and correct taste employ it to embellish their labours, the finished piece is deservedly placed in the first class of human productions. But let not the honour due to that divine enchantress, Poesy, whose sublime conceptions fill the imagination and delight the heart, be bestowed upon the handmaid whose humble office consists alone in melodious arrangement. This would be as if the mechanical hand that prepares and mixes the painter's colours, were to carry off the praise due to the creative mind which formed and executed the design. Nor let those whose literary compositions are dictated by a ready invention, a glowing fancy, and a feeling soul, and chastised by a sound judgment, be refused an honourable station among poets, merely because their works are not cast in the mould of verse. The exclusive homage which has hitherto been paid to the former class of writers, should be dismissed with other superstitions; and the merit of every literary performance should be fairly estimated, not by the comparatively trivial circumstance of having been written in prose or verse, but by its share of those far superior qualities before mentioned.

It obviously follows, from the point thus established, that the terms *poetry* and *prose* are incorrectly opposed to each other. *Verse* alone is, properly considered, the contrary of *prose*; and because poetry speaks the language of fancy, passion, and sentiment, and philosophy speaks the languageof reason, writing should be divided, not into poetry and prose, but into *poetry* and *philosophy:* a division which might answer an useful purpose, by occasionally reminding both poets and philosophers of the necessity of keeping within their respective provinces. Poets might learn that their proper office is to amuse rather than to instruct the world, in which latter attempt they have hitherto had little success: and (which is more important) philosophers might learn, in instructing mankind, to abandon the idle project of amusing them at the same time with poetical fancies and fictions.

CHAP. II.

On the Form and Matter of Poetry.

In its form, Poetry divides itself into the EPISTOLARY, the INSCRIPTIVE, the DIDACTIC, the ELEGIAC, the LYRIC, the DRAMATIC, and the EPIC.

Poetry, in its matter, divides itself into the LUDICROUS, the DESCRIPTIVE, the FESTIVE, the SENTIMENTAL, and the ETHIC.

We have thus six principal divisions as to form, and five as to subject, under which all the others may be reduced.

The *encomiastic* and *satiric* are not noticed, as being species of the ETHIC, whenever they can be brought under any description of legitimate poetry: nor the *epigrammatic*; as it belongs either to the INSCRIPTIVE (its original sense), the SATIRIC (its most general modern application), or to some of the other classes. The *sonnet* is properly referable to the LYRIC.

These classes are arranged according to their dignity; beginning with the least considerable, and ending with the greatest.

The LUDICROUS, the ELEGIAC, the ETHIC, the EPIC, and the DRAMATIC, have (the first three generally, the fourth and fifth always) their appropriate measure and form of verse; at least the exceptions are so rare, that they cannot properly enter into a general enumeration.

As comedy is the least poetic form of the drama, LUDICROUS poetry in general may be regarded as least partaking of the poetic spirit and character; from wanting dignity and pathos, and that vesture of imagery, diction, and cadence, by which poetry in the higher kinds is distinguished.

The ludicrous may be divided into the common and the burlesque; and the burlesque into the mock-heroic and the macaronic.

Of the common ludicrous the specimens are very numerous. The Hudibras of Butler, and the poems (so fertile in good and bad) of Dr. Wolcot, are the best.

Of the mock-heroic, the Lutrin of Boileau, the Dispensary of Garth, and the Rape of the Lock of Pope, are examples which almost universally recur to the mind whenever this kind of poetic composition is mentioned.

The macaronic consists of verses partly in one language and partly in another: it is hardly necessary to state examples of this whimsical medley; the late ingenious Dr. Geddes condescended to give some superior specimens.

Satirical poetry is descriptive of men and manners; its aim is to delineate the follies and chastise the vices of the age. Satire is evidently the offspring of polished times; and, unlike other poets, the satirist finds his empire enlarged, and his influence extended, by the progress of society.

Satire is either pointed or oblique: eloquence is the soul of the one, and ridicule of the other. The one rushes on its object in a torrent of vehemence and declamation; the other pursues a smooth tortuous course, occasionally reflecting to the mind the most momentous truths in the playful aspect of wit and humour. In Hudibras, the Lutrin, and the Rape of the Lock, the effect of oblique satire is heightened by an assumption of the heroic style, the perversion of which produces an effect exquisitely ludicrous. Gay's Shepherd's Week, and Greset's Ver-vert, belong to this species; as do many of Voltaire's lighter poems, and most of La Fontaine's tales. Swift's satire is commonly of a similar cast. The satire of Young is always pointed and saturnine. In Wolcot and Churchill the pointed and the oblique are united: as they are in Dryden and Pope, the two great original masters of English satire; who both possessed with wit and fancy a knowledge of men and manners, and an intuitive discernment of characters with the aptitude of describing them, which are its first requisites.

The following extracts afford a specimen of the manner of each in the delineation of character: it must however be remembered, that Pope moralizes while Dryden declaims:

" Some of their chiefs were leaders of the land:
In the first rank of these did Zimri stand;
A man so various, that he seem'd to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome:

Stiff in opinion, always in the wrong,
Was every thing by starts, and nothing long;
But in the course of one revolving moon,
Was chemist, fidler, statesman, and buffoon;
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
Beside ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.
Blest madman! who could every hour employ
With something new to wish, or to enjoy.
Railing and praising were his usual themes;
And both, to shew his judgment, in extremes.
Is ever violent, or ever civil,
That every man with him was God or devil.
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art;
Nothing went unrewarded, but desert:
Beggar'd by fools, whom still he found too late,
He had his jest, and they had his estate.
He laugh'd himself from court; then sought relief
In forming parties, but would ne'er be chief."

DRYDEN.

" In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half-hung,
The walls of plaister, and the floor of dung;
On once a flock-bed, now repair'd with straw,
With tape-tied curtains never meant to draw;
The George and garter dangling from his head,
Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red;
Great Villiers lies: alas! how chang'd from him
The life of pleasure, and the soul of whim,
Gallant and gay, in Cliveden's proud alcove,
The bower of wanton Shrewsbury and love;
Or just as gay at council, in a ring
Of mimic statesmen and their merry king!
No wit to flatter left of all his store;
No fool to laugh at, which he valued more;

> The victor of his health, his fortune, friends,
> And fame, this lord of useless thousands ends."

It would be amusing to pursue the comparison between these two great poets in the Dunciad and Mac Flecknoe; to observe the unpruned exuberance and careless vigour of the elder bard, and the exquisite judgment of his incomparable imitator.

We come now to DESCRIPTIVE poetry. This in its present state has much less of originality and force than the ludicrous: but it has abundantly more of the sweet and pleasing, of the elegant and the graceful. When descriptive poetry is merely such, it falls so much short of the distinctness and vividness of which painting is capable, that it cannot long interest. But when it is combined with philosophic thought, tender and generous feelings, and exalted sentiment, as in Dyer, Thomson, and Akenside, it constitutes a mixed species of poetry, of transcendant excellence. The simply natural, the soft and elegant, the beautiful, the picturesque, the magnificent and grand, ascending ultimately to the true sublime, constitute the principal characteristics of the different species of descriptive poetry. Descriptive poetry, when it rises into dialogue and action, with appropriate scenery, becomes pastoral, pictorial, or venatorial, according to its subjects.

Pastoral poetry has much of the descriptive. The scene necessarily implies it. Simplicity and sweetness are its most distinguishing features; a sort of *naïveté* in the characters, consisting of rusticity and acutenss, modesty and frankness. Theocritus is the great model of pastoral poetry; and had Bloomfield written in dialogue, *he* would have been *our* Theocritus. If Gay's was meant for ridicule, the natural genius of the writer, and his good-nature, carried him to something far better than the most successful ridicule. Cunningham was perhaps at first too much admired, and certainly is at present too little remembered. To close the descriptive list, those surely may well justify their opinion, who prefer Sannazarius * to Virgil in this branch of poetic composition. His numbers are full of dignity, variety, and impressive power; his local scenery and manners uncommonly happy; and his incidental passages most pathetic, beautiful, and elevated.

Pastoral poetry is, above all other, the most limited in its object; and when formed on the model presented to us by Virgil and Theocritus, should be a description of rural scenes and natural feelings, enriched with elegant language, and adorned by the most melodious numbers.

Few English pastorals will be recognized in this definition; the scenes which they represent are artificial, and the sentiments unnatural among us, because imitated from poets who were natives of a luxuriant region, and accustomed to the living tints and glowing azure of a cloudless sky. From this censure, however, the pastoral drama of Allan Ramsay must be excepted, as should Shenstone's celebrated ballad. The ballad is perhaps the happiest vehicle of pastoral poetry, and there are in our language many ballads of exquisite beauty. Some of our pastorals are elegiac; such is Milton's monody on Lycidas:

---

* In his piscatory eclogues.

"Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelid of the Morn,
We drove afield; and both together heard
What time the grey fly winds her sultry horn,
Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright,
Towards heaven's descent had slop'd his westering wheel."

The conclusion of this poem is in the true spirit of elegant pastoral:

"Thus sung the uncouth swain to th' oaks and rills,
When the still Morn went out in sandals grey;
He touch'd the tender stops of various quills
With eager thought, warbling his Doric lay;
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay.
At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue,
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new."

Of the FESTIVE we have examples in the odes of Anacreon: though concerning many of these a doubt has been, and apparently with reason, entertained, whether they are not much more modern. They are beautifully imitated by Cowley.

The SENTIMENTAL may be distributed into five principal classes, all which have the sentiments or affections for their objects; the *simply affectionate*, the *amatory*, the *patriotic*, the *philanthropic*, and the *devotional*.

The *simply affectionate* are those which are devoted to friendship, or the parental, filial, and fraternal, duties and affections; or to the general sympathies which interest man in the welfare of percipient and sentient nature in general. The *amatory* are sufficiently expressed in the form of these: some of the epistles of Ovid in the character of the Grecian heroines, his own to his wife, several of the elegies of Tibullus, and some of those of Propertius, are beautiful examples. Among the Italians, Petrarch, Tasso, Vittoria, Colonna, Veronica, Gambara, and Sannazarius, are pre-eminent, generally in chastity, refinement, and elevation, and frequently in the tenderness and natural sweetness of the passions: and among our own poets, Hammond, Shenstone, Thomson in his two exquisite songs and in many detached passages, Shakspeare and Milton in their occasional delineations, and Mrs. Robinson in her series of sonnets, and in many of her poems, which have exceeding delicacy, sweetness, and tenderness, with truth and energy of affection. Hammond, it is true, has something of a cold appearance, of which he would have had less if he had been more avowedly a translator of Tibullus. Shenstone has often, with a most musical sweetness, the truest and most affecting simplicity.

Of *patriotic* poetry, it must be owned, there is but little: some noble odes of Akenside, Thomson's Liberty, and Glover's Leonidas, breathe however this spirit. Nor is Smollet's Ode to Independance to be deprived of a high rank in this class.

Of the *philanthropic*, we have some noble specimens in the poems written to promote the abolition of the slave-trade.

Of the *devotional*, except some wonderful passages in the Psalms and prophets, instances of great excellence are rare; and I know not whether the Italian poets have not been more frequently successful than ours. In the Esther and the Athalie of Racine, there are admirable examples of devotional sentiment combined with poetry. In our own language, several passages in sir Richard Blackmore's too much neglected poem on the Creation; Baker on the Universe; some hymns and psalms of Watts, Addison, Barbauld, and Steele; many passages in Milton, and the sublime hymn which closes the Seasons; prove that poetry is capable, even in this class of vying with the dignity of its subject: though the majority of instances, it must be acknowledged, are exceedingly unhappy in sentiment and imagery.

There remains only the ETHIC among the principal classes (as to matter) of poetry. And here, though Pope is frequently excellent, both in sentiment and manner, I know not any author who so uniformly excels as Horace in several of his epistles; or with such sublimity as Juvenal in his tenth satire, which Dr. Johnson has imitated with considerable success.

The name of ELEGY was originally given to funereal monody, but was afterwards attached to all plaintive strains. In the Latin language it was always written in hexameter and pentameter verse. By the moderns an elegiac stanza was invented, assimilating as nearly as possible with those slow melodious numbers. Many elegies, and perhaps the best, are expressive only of soothing tenderness: such are those of Tibullus, so happily imitated by Hammond. The Jesse of Shenstone, which has perhaps never been surpassed, is all pathos. The celebrated elegy of Gray combines every charm of description and sentiment. The usual elegiac stanza, the monotony of which soon becomes oppressive to the ear, is sometimes happily exchanged for a lighter measure, as in Cowper's Juan Fernandez:

"Ye winds that have made me your sport,
Convey to this desolate shore
Some cordial endearing report
Of a land I shall visit no more.
My friends do they now and then send
A wish or a thought after me?
Oh! tell me I yet have a friend,
Though a friend I am never to see."

The *sonnet* represents in an abridged form the ancient elegy; the same slow stanza is assigned to each, and the sentiments suitable to one are appropriate to the other. The sonnet is derived from the Italian school, and was much cultivated in England during the seventeenth century. It is always limited to fourteen lines, an artificial character which seems to indicate an Oriental extraction. The following, by Milton, is a fine specimen of English sonnet in the Italian manner:

"O nightingale, that on yon leafy spray
Wast blest at eve, when all the woods are still!
Thou with fresh hopes the lover's heart dost fill,
When the jolly Hours lead on propitious May.
Thy liquid notes, that close the eye of Day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love. Oh! if Jove's will
Have link'd that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretell my hopeless doom in some grove nigh;
As thou from year to year hast sung too late
For my relief, yet hadst no reason why.
Whether the muse or love call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I."

In the following sonnet, which is of a modern date, the stanza is happily accommodated to the English language:

Written in the church-yard of Middleton, Sussex.

"Press'd by the moon, mute arbitress of tides,
Whilst the loud equinox its power combines,
The sea no more its swelling surge confines,
But o'er the shrinking land sublimely rides,

The wild blast rising from the western cave,
Drives the huge billows from their heaving bed,
Tears from their grassy tombs the village dead,
And breaks the silent sabbath of the grave.
With shells and sea-weed mingled on the shore,
Lo! their bones whiten on the frequent wave.
But vain to them the winds and waters rave,
They hear the warring elements no more;
While I am doom'd, by life's long storm opprest,
To gaze with envy on their gloomy rest."

Pope's Elegy to an Unfortunate Lady, and his Eloisa, are in heroic verse; which, in the hands of that great master, is adequate to the expression of every feeling.

Lyric poetry is versatile and miscellaneous, admitting almost every variety of measure and subject. Love and heroism, friendship and devotional sentiment, the triumphs of beauty, and the praises of patriotism, are all appropriate to lyrical composition. The soul of enthusiasm, the spirit of philosophy, and the voice of sympathy, may unite in the same ode. Of our lyrical writers, Dryden is confessedly eminent; Gray is distinguished by the majesty and delicacy of his expression, and the correctness of his style; Collins is occasionally animated by a portion of Pindaric spirit. Among our heroic odes there are perhaps none that breathe a loftier strain than the following patriotic invocation by Burns:

"Scots, who have with Wallace bled,
Scots, whom Bruce hath often led,
Welcome to the gory bed,
Or to glorious victory.
Now's the day, and now's the hour,
See the front of battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's power,
Edward's chains and slavery.

Who will be a traitor knave?
Who can ask a coward's grave?
Who so base to be a slave?
Traitor, coward, turn and flee.
Who for Scotland, king, and law,
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or freeman fa'?
Caledonian, on wi' me.

By oppressions, woes, and pains,
By your master's servile chains,
We will draw our dearest veins,
But they shall be, shall be free.
Lay the proud usurpers low;
Tyrants fall in every foe,
Liberty's in every blow:
Forward let us do, or die."

In the minor lyrics are included songs, a species of composition sedulously cultivated by English writers. The themes of songs are in general amatory or convivial; there are however some, of which the strain is purely patriotic and martial; and not a few are of the humorous cast. Shakspeare, Jonson, and other elder bards, have bequeathed to us songs of exquisite beauty. During the last century Prior excelled in these short compositions, but the most popular song-writer was Gay. Allan Ramsay has left some enchanting airs. Percy's Collection has restored many lyrical pieces of inimitable pathos and simplicity. In latter times, many songs of classical eminence have been supplied by Stevens, Wolcot, Sheridan, Dibdin, Roscoe, and Burns.

DIDACTIC poetry is minutely preceptive, and professes to convey useful instruction on some particular subject. It is obviously not easy to discover situations in which an author may become a practical teacher, without ceasing to be a poet: and this difficulty is aggravated to the English writer, who has not the resources of the Greek and Roman in the metrical capacities of his language.

Virgil's georgical poem is a performance of the first master, operating with the best materials. In imitation of Virgil, a poem was composed by Phillips on cyder. Toward the middle of the last century, when the didactic muse had most votaries, even polemics, physics, and metaphysics, were expounded in verse! But verse is not the medium by which information can be communicated with most advantage; and it is less suitably employed in elucidating abstract speculation, than in enforcing popular and acknowledged truths. The philosophy of Akenside is relished only for his imagery and harmonious language. The aphorisms of Armstrong are remembered only where the author was more sensible to the influences of Apollo than of Esculapius. The Economy of Vegetation, and the Loves of the Plants, are formed on a plan entirely original. It is probable that the primary idea of this work was suggested to the author by the perusal of Cowley's Garden; but on that simple site he has erected a magnificent palace, in which no vestige of the ancient edifice remains. With an imagination luxuriant as that of Ovid, and with powers of description scarcely less universal, he has invented a machinery appropriate to his subject, and which is also derived solely from the philosophy of modern times. From the extensive notes appended to his poems, it is however obvious, that though he might thus embody the principles of science to the eye of fancy, he despaired of rendering them intelligible without the agency of prose. Mason's English Garden is more descriptive than didactic. De Lille's Jardins is a chef-d'œuvre in its kind. In the Essay on Criticism, Pope has most happily enlivened didactic style with wit and satire.

Epic poetry concentrates all that is sublime in action, description, or sentiment. In the structure of a regular epic poem, criticism requires that the fable should be founded in fact; and that fiction should fill the picture, of which the outline is traced by truth. In the conduct of the poem, the machinery must be subservient to the main design, and the action should be simple and uniform. In the Iliad, the action is limited to the destruction of Troy, which is only to be effected by the conciliation of Achilles to the common cause. In the Odyssey, it is the establishment of Ulysses in Ithaca; an event which, after innumerable difficulties, he is finally enabled to accomplish. In the Æneid, the hero is destined to found a Trojan colony in Latium. In the Jerusalem Delivered, the object of the poem, from its commencement to its close, is the restoration of that city to the Christians.

Criticism requires that poetical justice should be dispensed to all parties; success being awarded to the virtuous, and punishment inflicted on the guilty. On these principles, three authors only, Homer, Virgil, and Tasso, have produced epic works. There are however many poems of the epic or heroic cast to which criticism has hitherto assigned no characteristic name: such are the Lusiad of Camoens, and the Henriade of Voltaire. In the Paradise Lost, Milton appears in solitary majesty and magnificence. He maintains a lofty independance on rules and systems, and eternizes to himself a distinction superior to all that criticism has to withhold or to bestow. The Inferno of Dante, the Orlando of Ariosto, and the Fairy Queen of Spenser, are romances; a species of composition purely fictitious, in which no other restriction is imposed on the poet's fancy than that he shall continue to interest and amuse his reader.

Several romances of a recent date are entitled to praise: such as the Oberon of Wieland, ably translated by Mr. Sotheby; the Thalaba of Southey, of which the beauties would be more generally appreciated if the work was less tinged with gloom; and the Lay of the Last Minstrel, in which a fable of the most superficial texture is drawn out in a succession of scenes which perpetually animate and delight the imagination.

It is obvious, that the poetical nomenclature established on classical authority, is not sufficiently extensive to include all the compositions of modern times.

To what classical name shall we refer the noble ethics of Pope in his Epistles, and of Cowper in his Task? By what name shall we designate the Traveller and the Deserted Village, the Pleasures of Memory, the Pleasures of Hope, and many other exquisite productions? Ossian's poems have been classed with epic compositions; but they are more analogous to the old heroic lays chanted by the scalds, bards, and minstrels. The relics of Scandinavian literature afford many specimens of poetry which, though inferior in beauty, are obviously of similar origin and execution.

Originally a DRAMA was a metrical composition, and exhibited all the critical refinements of poetry. The title of poet is still given to every dramatic author, even if his composition is written in prose, and though the highest dramatic powers may exist without the smallest talent for poetry. The avowed object of the drama is to develope the passions, or to delineate the manners, of mankind : tragedy effects the one, and comedy the other. In the English language are many popular dramas of a mixed character, written in verse intermingled with prose, and called *plays*. The best pieces in Beaumont and Fletcher, and even of Shakspeare, belong to this order. The English drama deviates essentially from that of classical antiquity; and independant of the division of acts and scenes, there is little resemblance between them. The triple unities of time, place, and action, are seldom observed on the English stage; and our best writers have allowed, that between the acts any change of scene is admissible. In reality this operation is performed in most tragedies and all comedies, at any season, without either condition or restriction ; nor perhaps is any change censurable, the cause and object of which are immediately comprehended by the audience. To the limitation of time more attention is paid. In many tragedies the action is included in one day. Unity of design is obviously an obligation imposed by good sense: and Shakspeare, guided only by his feelings of propriety, is in general careful to exclude from his plays a divided interest; an error perpetually committed by Beaumont and Fletcher, and his other dramatic contemporaries.

To construct a simple dramatic fable is no very easy task. The author has to provide sources of constantly augmenting interest, to present a discrimination of characters, to suggest situations capable of extorting from the spectators an active participation in the scene; and above all, to supply a series of natural incidents, the springs of dramatic action, by which all the life and motion of the piece are produced.

The dramatic style should imbibe its character from that of the individuals introduced in the scene, and transmit the impression of every feeling which is there pourtrayed. On this excellence is founded the superiority of Shakspeare to all other dramatists: from him each passion receives its appropriate language. With a few masterly touches, he lays open the heart, exhibits its most secret movements, and excites in every bosom correspondent emotions. The poet who, next to Shakspeare, has excelled in the dramatic style, is Otway. The tragedies of Rowe possess extraordinary merit. In the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger, are innumerable passages of high poetical beauty; and in those of Dryden are discovered the most brilliant combinations of thought and fancy: but still he wants the touches of nature; that true dramatic idiom which is instantly understood by the heart; and the absence of which is not compensated by beautiful imagery, or the most refined graces of composition.

Dramatic blank verse, when flowing with freedom and facility, is more happily adapted than prose to the expression of strong emotion; it is not only more harmonious, but more concise; and being exonerated from that metrical precision which is expected in other styles of poetry, is simply the language of impassioned feeling. Much of the imagery which might delight in the closet, would offend on the stage: yet figurative language is often employed with great effect in describing the tempestuous passions. In a state of agitation the mind becomes peculiarly susceptible of new combinations. Grief is eloquent: and though the chain of thought is too tenacious to be broken by sensible impressions, it discovers in every external object some typical illustration of its own sufferings; some image which, by a kind of fictitious sympathy, seems respondent to its individual feelings. Thus Lear, though insensible to the storm, invokes the elements, reverting to the contumely he has experienced:

> " I tax not *you*, ye elements, with unkindness;
> I never gave *you* kingdom, call'd *you* children;
> *You* owe me no subscription."

In impassioned language, even a mixture of metaphors is not indefensible: in a moment of distraction the mind is versatile, and indistinct in its perceptions; and consequently becomes liable to form abrupt, desultory, and even incongruous associations.

It is true, that further than as ethics combine themselves with sentiment and affection, it is difficult, respectable as they are, to elicit poetry from the principles of morality; but thus combined, they shine forth like the sun with a glorious and beneficent union of light and animating warmth. This gives the Platonic philosophy (which embodies Virtue, and presents her visible in divine beauty) such advantage in poetry; and as a proof of this, we may read Akenside with admiration and transport never to be exhausted.

CHAPTER III.

Of the General Characteristics of Poetry.

Metrical harmony is but the medium by which the poet transmits his ideas and sentiments: it constitutes the fabric into which his conceptions are wrought, the form in which his sentiments are exhibited. Metrical harmony is common to all who assume the name of poets; from the humble versifier creeping through hedge-rows of rhyme at the foot of Parnassus, to the son of genius, who has drunk of inspiration at its source, and rides

> "Upon the seraph wing of ecstacy."

It has appeared difficult to suggest a proper mode of distinction between these two orders of writers; and it has been often asked, What is the real difference between the legitimate bard and a maker of pretty verses? Their respective pretensions might, it seems, be amicably adjusted, by leaving to the former an exclusive right to the unqualified character of *poet*, and assigning the rank of *metrical poet* to the latter. There is in metrical harmony a charm that often renders a trivial thought pleasing. There are also certain agreeable epithets which, if not egregiously misplaced, must always call to the mind grateful associations; and which, when aided by melodious verse, will generally impart some transient sensation of delight. To awaken strong and permanent feelings of this nature, is the prerogative only of the original bard. Poetical emotion springs from admiration or from sympathy, and may be awakened by the novelty or the renovation of sensation. It may arise from combinations new to the fancy, or from recollections interesting to the heart. In the energy of his conceptions, and in the charm of his expression, resides all the poet's power. There are no features of sublimity and magnificence, no touches of tenderness or pathos, but may be traced to those two sources of poetical excellence. Sublimity originates in the amplitude of the poet's mind; and is discovered in the majesty of his images, or the grandeur of his sentiments: a sensation of terror, mingled with admiration, also belongs to the sublime. Such is that awakened by Milton's awful description of the gates of hell:

> "On a sudden open fly
> With impetuous recoil, and jarring sound,

> Th' infernal doors; and on their hinges grate
> Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook
> Of Erebus."

The promotion of virtue may be considered as essential to the character of Poetry. The virtue of descriptive poetry in general, or of pastoral, convivial, and amatory poetry, will be questioned. And yet it may be said, Is it not truly poetry? It is truly poetry if it gives just, and pleasing, and amiable views of nature. It is truly poetic, if it celebrates love and beauty as they deserve to be celebrated; if it exalts agreeably to the benign and wise constitution of our nature, passions into affections, and affections into virtues; if it inspires sentiments of simplicity and gentleness, of content and benevolence; if it tranquillizes and refines, softens and purifies, the heart. And, in truth, all blameless pleasure is in its tendency and effect virtuous: nor is pleasure otherwise vicious then if it offends the principles of sober moderation, or violates justice and benevolence. And in the higher poetry, such as the Seasons of Thomson, the Pleasures of Imagination by Akenside, very much of Shakspeare, and almost all of Milton, there is a divine philosophy more truly moral, and more effectually meliorating, than many laboured systems of ethics, and volumes of theological prose.

Poetry is in a peculiar and most comprehensive sense, an imitative art. In its two highest kinds, the epic and the dramatic, this is most evident. This imitation it effects partly by its sentiments and imagery, and partly (like music) by the very tone and cadence. But in an art, the beautiful and the excellent are the proper objects of imitation; and there ought to be no other imitation than such as may be subservient to these. Now there being nothing so beautiful as virtue and goodness,—the pure, the tender, the generous, and the elevated affections,—true poetry cannot be the instrument of vice and folly. If verse descends to this, it may retain its dress, and some remains of its air and tone; but it has lost the divine spirit essential to its character.

What follows is in the genuine spirit of terrific sublimity:

> " She opened; but to shut
> Excell'd her power. The gates wide open stood;
> That with extended wing a bannered host,
> Under spread ensigns marching, might pass through
> With horse and chariots rank'd in loose array.
> So wide they stood; and like a furnace-mouth
> Cast forth redounding smoke, and ruddy flame.
> Before their eyes in sudden view appear
> The secrets of the hoary deep; a dark
> Illimitable ocean, without bound,
> Without dimension, where length, breadth, and highth,
> And time, and place, are lost."

Sublimity is produced by grandeur of sentiment:

> " Farewell, happy fields,
> Where joy for ever dwells! Hail, horrors! hail,

Infernal world! and thou, profoundest hell,
Receive thy new possessor; one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place; and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

In sublime composition no image should be introduced which is not calculated to impress the mind with feelings of solemnity. The following description of Satan exemplifies the union of sublime imagery, with sublimity of sentiment. There is even something like pathos in the concluding passage:

" He, above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower. His form had not yet lost
All her original brightness; nor appear'd
Less than arch-angel ruined, and the excess
Of glory obscur'd: as when the sun, new-risen,
Looks through the horizontal misty air,
Shorn of his beams; or from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs. Darkened, so yet shone
Above them all the arch-angel: but his face
Deep scars of thunder had entrench'd, and care
Sat on his faded cheek; but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride
Waiting revenge. Cruel his eye, but cast
Signs of remorse and passion, to behold
The fellows of his crime (the followers rather),
Far other once beheld in bliss, condemn'd
For ever now to have their lot in pain:

Millions of spirits, for his fault, amerced
Of heaven, and from eternal splendour flung
For his revolt, yet faithful how they stood;
Their glory withered: as when heaven's fire
Hath scathed the forest oak, or mountain pine,
With singed top their stately growth, though bare,
Stands on the blasted heath. He now prepared
To speak; whereat their double ranks they bend
From wing to wing, and half inclose him round
With all his peers: attention held them mute.
Thrice he essay'd; and thrice, in spite of scorn,
Tears, such as angels weep, burst forth: at last
Words interwove with sighs found out their way."

An energetic simplicity is essential to the sublime, which disclaims artificial ornament. Description includes many of the elements of poetry, and alternately produces emotions of sublimity and beauty. The figurative style is often assumed, in order to give more richness and vividness to description. The elements are thus embodied, and morn and evening are perpetually represented under some popular and pleasing image. Thus Milton personifies the morning:

" Now Morn, her early steps in the eastern clime
Advancing, sowed the earth with orient pearl."

And Shakspeare:

" But see, the Morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dews of yon high eastern hill."

Description is sometimes rendered more lively by the introduction of a figurative allusion. Thus, in the Allegro, Milton illustrates his description of sunrise:

> "Sometimes walking not unseen,
> By hedge-row elms, or hillocks green;
> Right against the eastern gate,
> Where the great sun begins his state,
> Rob'd in flames and amber bright,
> The clouds in thousand liveries dight."

In the Penseroso he again enlivens his imagery by an interesting allusion:

> "Missing thee, I walk unseen
> On the dry smooth-shaven green;
> To behold the wandering moon
> Riding near her highest noon,
> Like one that hath been led astray
> Through the heaven's wide pathless way;
> And oft as if her head she bow'd,
> Stooping through a fleecy cloud."

In Dryden's poem of the Flower and the Leaf is the following beautiful illustration of the spring:

> "When first the tender blades of grass appear;
> And buds, that yet the breath of Eurus fear,
> Stand at the door of life, and ask to clothe the year."

Poetical description is either general or local, and admits of artificial or simple imagery. In the two following passages Pope exemplifies the difference of general and local description:

> "Thy trees, fair Windsor, now shall leave their wood,
> And half thy forests rush into my flood;
> Bear Britain's thunder, and her cross display,
> To the bright regions of the rising day;

Tempt icy seas, where scarce the waters roll,
Where clearer flames glow round the frozen pole;
Or under southern skies exalt their sails,
Led by new stars, and borne by spicy gales.
For me the balm shall bleed, the amber flow,
The coral redden, and the ruby glow,
The pearly shell its lucid globe enfold,
And Phœbus warm the ripening ore to gold."

Here the author dwells not sufficiently long on any object to leave a distinct picture on the mind. But in the ensuing lines the delineation is too bold to be missed:

" In genial spring, beneath the quiv'ring shade,
Where cooling vapours breathe along the mead,
The patient fisher takes his silent stand,
Intent, his angle trembling in his hand;
With looks unmov'd he hopes the scaly breed,
And eyes the dancing cork and bending reed.
Our plenteous streams a various race supply:
The bright-eyed perch, with fins of Tyrian dye;
The silver eel, in shining volumes roll'd;
The yellow carp, in scales bedropt with gold."

The two following extracts from Milton happily illustrate the difference of artificial and simple imagery:

" Now the bright morning-star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her
The flowery May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow cowslip, and the pale primrose.
Hail, beauteous May, that dost inspire
Mirth, and youth, and warm desire!

Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing."

" While the plowman near at hand
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land ;
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale."

In general description, it is the poet's object to force on the mind a variety of brilliant ideas and vivid impressions. In his local or individual delineations, he presents images palpable to the imagination, and almost to the senses ; he stimulates latent feelings, or renovates forgotten sensations. In the combination of artificial imagery, he employs the power of novelty ; in that of simple images, he relies on the charm of truth. With the one the attention is awakened, by the other it is absorbed. The reader perceives in himself a capacity for forming associations till then unknown ; but he is yet more pleased to retrace scenes and sentiments familiar to memory, and dear to to the heart. In one instance he is astonished by the variety of the poet's conceptions : in the other he is enchanted by the fidelity of his imitations. The magnificence of figurative language and metaphorical description extorts admiration : the simplicity of natural images inspires delight. In local description the poet should introduce only such objects as harmonize perfectly with his design. Thus in his delicious landscape of Eden, Milton carefully avoids the intrusion of exotic imagery:

"Thus was this place
A happy rural seat, of various views:
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balms;
Others, whose fruit burnished with golden rind
Hung amiable, Hesperian fables true
(If true) here only, and of delicious taste.
Betwixt them, lawns, or level downs, and flocks
Grazing the tender herb, were interposed:
Or palmy hillock, or the flow'ry top
Of some irriguous valley, spreads her store;
Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose.
"Another side, umbrageous grots and caves
Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine
Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps
Luxuriant: meanwhile murmuring waters fall
Down the slope hill dispers'd; or in a lake
That to the fringed bank, with myrtle crown'd,
Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams."

There is in local description a charm that renders objects, in themselves uncongenial, engaging to the mind. The following passage presents few images of beauty; but in contemplating it, who does not feel, that without being removed from the common walk of nature, he is visited by the influences of poetry?

"The day is come, when I again repose
Here under this dark sycamore, and view
Those plots of cottage ground, the orchard tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,

Among the woods and copses lose themselves,
Nor with their green and simple hues disturb
The wild green landscape. Once again I see
Hedge-rows, then hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door, and wreaths of smoke
Sent up in silence from among the trees;
With some uncertain notice, as might seem,
Of vagrant dwellers in the fenceless woods;
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The hermit sits alone."

If such is the charm of local scenery, yet greater is the captivation of that individual and characteristic sentiment, which, from its appropriation to the drama, has been called dramatic. Such indeed is its enchantment, that it has been found capable of producing the most exquisite emotion, without any auxiliary embellishments from figurative language or picturesque imagery. We are never more delighted with the poet, than when thus intimately admitted to his confidence; when we are suffered to commune with his heart, to explore his most retired thoughts, and partake his most sacred feelings. This charm of individuality was in some of their poems eminently possessed by Chaucer, and other of our elder bards; it constituted the leading feature in Cowper's lays; it formed the magic of Burns; and it distinguishes the author of the Lyrical Ballads. The pathetic, like the sublime, must be concise and simple. It depends not so much on the thought as the expression. Virgil's description of Andromache on recognizing Æneas at the tomb of Hector, is strikingly beautiful:

> "Verane tua facies? et verus mihi nuncius affers?
> Nate deâ, vivisne? aut, si lux alma recessit,
> Ubi Hector est?"

The whole passage is affecting, but the pathos dwells in the "ubi Hector est?" Figurative language is often happily employed in the description of impassioned feeling. Sometimes it appears to be the natural overflowing of tenderness:

> "Thy cave should be a lover's bower,
> Though raging winter rent the air;
> And she a lovely little flower,
> That I would tend, and shelter there."

In general, however, the simple and unadorned style is most appropriate to pathos and tenderness. Thus Constance, in her touching appeal to the cardinals, exclaims of her son:

> "And so he'll die; and rising so again,
> When I shall meet him in the court of heaven
> I shall not know him; therefore never, never,
> Must I behold my pretty Arthur more."

The *curiosa felicitas*, that charm or felicity of expression which Horace so happily exemplified, is one of the most powerful agents in producing poetical emotion. It is the attribute which belongs only to the poet of nature; and is the effusion of some fortunate moments, when consummate judgment has been impelled and inspired by exquisite feeling. It is impossible but that the readers of Shakspeare and Milton must recollect innumerable examples of this kind of excellence. Who has not felt the enchantment conveyed by Shakspeare's "heaven-kissing hill?" What lover of nature has not in some bright autumnal morning, while contemplating a rural scene, experienced that mixed sensation of enjoyment and stillness which is all described in "the air smells wooingly?" Felicity of expression is the native idiom of genius; and as the goddess of beauty was discovered by her first movements, the genuine poet may be detected by a single epithet. The spirit of poetry is not confined to subjects of dignity and importance: it may be perceived in a simple lay, and even in a sportive song. It visited Sappho, as it had sojourned with Pindar; and was as truly the attendant of Theocritus as of Homer. Nor is poetical emotion inspired only by the song of heroes and of gods. It may be awakened even by the strain of playful tenderness, in which the lover celebrates some darling of his mistress. The requisites of the true poetical character are thus happily summed up by the duke of Buckingham:

> "'Tis not a flash of fancy, which sometimes,
> Dazzling our minds, sets off the slightest rhymes,
> Bright as a blaze, but in a moment done.
> True wit is everlasting; like the sun,

Which, though sometimes behind a cloud retired,
Breaks out again, and is by all admired.
Number, and rhyme, and that harmonious sound
Which not the nicest ear with harshness wound,
Are necesary, yet but vulgar arts:
And all in vain these superficial parts
Contribute to the structure of the whole,
Without a genius too, for that's the soul;
A spirit which inspires the work throughout,
As that of nature moves the world about;
A flame that glows amid conceptions fit,
Even something of divine, and more than wit;
Itself unseen, yet all things by it shewn,
Describing all things, but describ'd by none."

CHAPTER IV.

Of English Versification.

In the English language, versification depends not on the quantities, or the length and shortness, of the syllables: but on the modulation of the accents, and the disposition of the pauses; to which is generally added the recurrence of rhyme. The heroic verse consists of ten syllables: its harmony is produced by a certain proportionate distribution of accented and unaccented syllables; and its specific character, whether lively or solemn, soft or slow, is determined by their order and arrangement. When unaccented and accented syllables are regularly alternated, it is called the iambic verse; as,

"A shepherd's boy, he seeks no higher name,
Led forth his flock beside the silver Thame."

When this order is inverted, and the unaccented is preceded by the accented syllable, it is called a trochaic verse; as,

"Ambition first *sprung* from the blest abodes."
"*Take,* holy earth, *all* that my soul holds dear."

The frequent intervention of the trochaic is apt to produce harshness. The monotony which it might be expected would result from a succession of iambic lines, is obviated by the freedom with which the pause is transferred from one syllable to another; a freedom which constitutes the charm, and produces all the variety, of English verse. The pause of cesura is that interval of suspension which must naturally arise in every verse, but the position of which the English poet is allowed to change and diversify at pleasure. When the pause falls on the fourth syllable, the strain is smooth and airy; as,

"Soft is the strain | when Zephyr gently blows,
And the smooth stream | in smoother numbers flows."

When it falls on the second it is commonly accelerated; as,

"Not so | when swift Camilla scours the plain."

Occasionally the pause dwells on the first, second, or penultimate syllable:

"O friend! | may each domestic bliss be thine:
Be no unpleasing melancholy | mine.

Me | let the tender office long engage,
To rock the cradle of declining age."

A second pause is sometimes happily introduced:

"O ever beauteous | ever lovely! | tell,
Is it in heaven a crime to love too well?"

In the following examples, the first passage has all the spirit and energy of the ode; the second, the slow and plaintive melody of the elegiac strain:

"Come then, my friend, my Genius, come along,
O master of the poet and the song!
And while the muse now stoops, | and now ascends,
To man's low passions, | or their glorious ends,
Teach me, like thee, | in various nature wise,
To fall with dignity, | with temper rise;
Form'd by thy converse, | happily to steer
From grave to gay, | from lively to severe;
Correct with spirit, | eloquent with ease,
Intent to reason, | or polite to please."

"In these deep solitudes, | and awful cells,
Where heavenly-pensive contemplation | dwells,
And ever-musing melancholy reigns."

The heroic verse is often diversified by the intervention of an Alexandrine line of twelve syllables, which is liberally used by Dryden: its abuse is pointedly censured by Pope:

"A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
Which, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along."

It forms a noble termination:

"Teach me to love and to forgive;
Exact my own defects to scan,
What others are to feel, and know myself a man."

Triplets often occur in heroic verse; a practice to which Dryden was strongly addicted, but which is now generally avoided by correct writers.

The stanza of nine lines, the imitation of the Italian, was introduced by Spenser. Of this verse (which, if not impracticable, was at least repugnant, to the English language) the following extract is a favourable specimen:

> "A gentle knight was pricking on the plaine,
> Yclad in mightie arms, and silver shield,
> Wherein old dintes of deep woundes did remain,
> The cruel marks of many a bloody field;
> Yet armes till that time did he never wield.
> His angry steed did chide his foaming bitt,
> As much disdaining to the curb to yield:
> A jolly knight he seem'd, and faire did sit,
> As one for knightly gests and fierce encounters fitt."

A stanza more polished in its structure is adopted by Mr. Sotheby in his admirable translation of Wieland's Oberon. The following passage describes Rezia's first interview with the Hermit:

> "Rezia, at once entranced in holy bliss,
> Aw'd by his look, that beams celestial grace,
> Bows, as before the Genius of the place,
> And prints his wrinkled hand with pious kiss.
> Touched by his gracious mien or friendly air,
> His beard that swept his breast with silver hair,
> Her soul this stranger as her sire reveres;
> A second look has banish'd all her fears:
> Each reads the other's heart, nor finds a stranger there."

The most popular stanza is that appropriate to the ballad, which is composed of four lines with interchanging rhymes. Such is the measure of Goldsmith's beautiful tale of Edwin and Angelina:

"Turn, gentle hermit of the dale,
And guide my lonely way
To where yon taper cheers the vale
With hospitable ray."

And such, with the remission of rhyme in the first and third lines, is the measure of Chevy Chace:

"God save the king, and bless the land,
In plenty, joy, and peace;
And grant henceforth that foul debate
'Twixt noblemen may cease."

The elegiac stanza consists of four alternately responsive lines of ten syllables each: it is well adapted to short poems; but in compositions of any length, its slow monotonous cadence becomes oppressive to the ear. In the celebrated elegy of Gray, its defects, however, are concealed by a profusion of poetical beauties; and by the graceful muse of Hammond its fetters are rendered elegant and ornamental:

"Why should the lover quit his pleasing home,
In search of danger on some foreign ground?
Or from his weeping fair ungrateful roam,
And risk in every stroke a double wound?
Ah! better far, beneath the spreading shade,
With cheerful friends to drain the sprightly bowl,
To sing the beauties of my darling maid,
And on the sweet idea feast my soul."

The common anapestic verse, of eleven and twelve syllables, in which the accent falls on every third syllable, has generally been appropriated to humorous subjects: when formed into the stanza, it assumes a different character. In the noble war-song of Burns it is however a strain truly sublime; and in the following passage flows with equal sweetness and pathos:

"'Tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more:
I mourn, but, ye woodlands, I mourn not for you;
For morn is approaching, your charms to restore,
Perfum'd with fresh fragrance, and glittering with dew.
Nor yet for the ravage of winter I mourn;
Kind nature the embryo blossom will save:
But when shall spring visit the mouldering urn?
Oh! when shall it dawn on the night of the grave?"

This stanza is, from the intractable nature of the anapestic measure, of difficult execution. In that employed by Cowper in the following instance, constructed on similar principles, the syllables are less numerous, and the cadence is in general more harmonious:

"I am monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute;
From the centre, all round to the sea,
I am lord of the fowl and the brute.
O Solitude! where are the charms
That sages have found in thy face?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
Than reign in this desolate place."

The occurrence of double rhymes is neither very frequent nor very easy in English verse; they are chiefly employed in songs, and are seldom admitted in the higher order of lyrical composition. The following passage from Dryden's ode on St. Cecilia's day, affords the most happy example of this kind of verse in our language:

"Softly sweet in Lydian measures,
Soon he sooth'd his soul to pleasures.
War, he sung, is toil and trouble,
Honour but an empty bubble;
Never ending, still beginning,
Fighting still, and still destroying:
If the world be worth thy winning,
Think, oh! think it worth enjoying."

The simplest and most fluent of all verse is the couplet of eight syllables. In this measure Milton has written his two exquisite poems, the Allegro and Penseroso:

"And may at length my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit, and rightly tell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain!"

Pope and Gray are generally considered as the most correct writers of rhyme; and Dryden, who knew the affluence of the English language, has in his own compositions exhibited all its various capacities of harmony and versification.

Besides the iambic and the trochaic, there is another kind of verse very common in English poetry, called the anapestic. In this the accent falls on every third syllable: it is a quick and lively measure, and therefore very often used in songs. Sometimes the first accent of a line is made to rest on its first or second syllable. The following lines are examples of this verse:

> At the clóse of the dáy, when the hámlet is stíll,
> And mórtals the swéets of forgétfulness próve.

A very curious and not unpleasing structure of verse existed in the early age of English poetry, during the fourteenth century. The principles of this were, that each line should consist of four poetical feet, in the anapestic measure; and instead of rhyming the ends of the lines, it was required that in each line the same letter should occur three times; twice in the first half of the line, and once in the last. Sometimes however the alliteration extended to only two instances, or to four; and sometimes, where there were three, two of them occurred in the last half-line: the corresponding letters were generally at the beginning of a word, but sometimes not. The following is an example of this versification: we have reduced the words, as much as possible, to the modern orthography, to make them more intelligible; but have been obliged to retain the superfluous letters, when these were either accented, or necessary to the alliteration. The corresponding letters are printed in

Italics; and where an accent is marked, the instance must be pronounced as a separate syllable. The passage here quoted is from an old poem called the Visions of Pierce Plowman, of which an interesting account is given in Mr. Godwin's Life of Chaucer: it is a sublime and energetic description of Nature obeying the call of Conscience, to afflict mankind with punishments for their crimes.

*K*ind[1] *C*onscience then heard, and *c*ame out of the planets,[2]
And sent *f*orth his *f*oragers. *F*evers and *f*luxes,
*C*oughés and *c*ardiacles,[3] *c*rampés and tooth-aches,
*R*heums and *r*adgondes[4] and *r*aïnous scalles,[5]
*B*ilés and *b*otches and *b*urning agues,
*F*renzies and *f*oul evil, *f*oragers of Kind,
Had *p*ricked and *p*reyed[6] *p*olles of the *p*eople,[7]
That[8] *l*argely a *l*egion *l*osten[9] their *l*ives soon.
There was "*H*arow![10] and *h*elp! *h*ere cometh Kind,
With *D*eath that is *d*readful, to un*d*o us all."
The *l*ord that *l*iv'th after *l*ust[11] then a*l*oud cried
After *C*omfort, a *k*night, to *c*ome and bear his banner.
"A*l*arm, a*l*arm!" quoth that *l*ord, "each *l*ife keep his own!"[12]
And then *m*et these *m*en: their *m*instrels *m*ight[13] pipe,
And their *h*eralds of arms *h*ad descried lords.[14]

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[1] *Kind* is an old word for *Nature:* the passage here is, Nature then heard Conscience. *K* and *c* were considered as the same letter in this versification; even when the *k* was silent, as in the twelfth and the last lines. [2] The planets were anciently supposed to be the sources of diseases. [3] Heart-aches. [4] The piles. [5] Gnawing leprosy. [6] Marked out and preyed upon. [7] That is, so many *polls* (or heads) of the people; as we say a poll-tax. [8] So that. [9] Lost. [10] An old French word for *help.* [11] *After lust* means *in uxury.* [12] Let each preserve his own life! [13] Did. [14] *Lords*

Agé the hoar he *w*as in the va*w*-*w*ard,[15]
And *b*are the *b*anner *b*efore Death ; *b*y right he it claim'd.
*K*indé *c*ame after, with many *k*een sores,
As *p*lagues and *p*estilences, and much *p*eople shent.[16]
So *K*ind through *c*orruptions *k*illed full many.
*D*eath came *d*riving after ; and all to dust pashed[17]
*K*ingés and *C*aïsers,[18] *k*nightés and popes.

Blank verse is composed of lines which flow into each other without the intervention of rhymes ; its metrical principle resides in its pauses, which should be so judiciously spread as never to suffer the want of rhyme to be felt. Of the few poets who have attempted this species of composition, Milton first, and after him Thomson, Armstrong, Akenside, and Cowper, are pre-eminent. The amplitude of Milton's verse is unequalled: it dilates with the author's thought, it harmonizes with the reader's sentiment, and its varied cadence alternately rolls with majesty, or falls in a mellifluent strain of melody on the unwearied and unsated ear. The principle of this exquisite mechanism has been lately referred by a judicious critic (the Rev. Mr. Crowe, in his Lectures at the Royal Insitution) to Milton's bold practice of distributing in different lines, words so nearly connected (such as the preposition governing the noun, and the pronoun attached to the verb) as almost to appear inseparable. That this practice, which Mr.

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here means the hostile leaders. [15] Van. [16] Hurt. [17] Dashed. with the paw or hoof. [18] Cæsars, or emperors.

Crowe calls *breaking the natural joint of the sentence*, is favourable to the freedom of blank verse, cannot be disputed; but it may be questioned whether the poet was himself conscious of the mechanism which he employed, or was directed by any other principle than his own acute sensibility to harmony. The following short extracts may illustrate the difference of style perceptible in the various writers of blank verse.

"Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, heavenly muse that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
The shepherd who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of chaos; or if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song;
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme."

MILTON.

"He comes! he comes! in every breeze, the power
Of Philosophic Melancholy comes.
His near approach the sudden-starting tear,
The glowing cheek, the mild dejected air,
The soften'd feature, and the beating heart
Pierc'd deep with many a virtuous pang, declare.
O'er all the soul his sacred influence breathes,
Inflames imagination, through the breast

Infuses every tenderness, and far
Beyond dim earth exalts the swelling thought."

THOMSON.

" From heaven my strains begin; from heaven descends
The flame of genius to the chosen heart,
And beauty with poetic wonder join'd
And inspiration. Ere the rising sun
Shone o'er the deep, or mid the vault of night
The moon her silver lamp suspended; ere
The vales with spring were water'd, or with groves
Of oak or pine the ancient hills were crown'd;
Then the great Spirit whom his works adore,
Within his own deep essence view'd the forms,
The forms eternal, of created things:
The radiant sun, the moon's nocturnal lamp,
The mountains and the streams, the ample stores
Of earth, of heaven, of nature. From the first,
On that full scene his love divine he fix'd,
His admiration; till in time complete,
What he admired and lov'd, his vital power
Unfolded into being." AKENSIDE.

" O ye whose souls relentless love has tamed
To soft distress, or friend untimely fallen!
Court not the luxury of tender thought;
Nor deem it impious to forget those pains
That hurt the living, nought avail the dead.
Go, soft enthusiast, quit the cypress groves;
Nor to the rivulet's lonely moanings tune
Your sad complaint. Go, seek the cheerful haunts
Of men, and mingle with the bustling crowd;
Lay schemes for wealth, or power, or fame—the wish
Of nobler minds, and push them night and day;
Or join the caravan, in quest of scenes
New to your eyes, and shifting every hour,
Beyond the Alps, beyond the Appenines."

ARMSTRONG.

"O winter, ruler of the inverted year,
Thy scatter'd hair with sleet-like ashes fill'd,
Thy breath congeal'd upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapt in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car indebted to no wheels,
But urged by storms along its slippery way!
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art. Thou hold'st the sun
A pris'ner in the yet undawning east,
Short'ning his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,
Down to the rosy west; but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse, and instructive ease."

COWPER.

The defect of Young's blank verse is, that the sense commonly closes with the line; and that it has too much of the systematical uniformity, without the musical varieties, of rhyme. Whether rhyme or blank verse is entitled to pre-eminence, is a question which must ultimately be determined by individual taste. In the choice of his measure, the poet must obviously be influenced by the nature of his subject; and rhyme, and blank verse, will alternately obtain his preference. In all the gay and airy excursions of fancy, or the lighter touches of feeling, he will find in rhyme an auxiliary equally pleasing and important. To such compositions as require a measure of spirited and vivacious movement, rhyme is an indispensable appendage. To satire it adds poignancy, to humour it gives elegance: it imparts renovation to old ideas, and lends attraction to trivial sentiments: it renders familiar illustration graceful, and plain sense eloquent. In all but the Alpine regions of poetry, rhyme is a fence no less useful than ornamental, enriching and enlivening every object. In the Allegro and Penseroso, even Milton conceived it no dereliction of poetical freedom, to pursue the path traced out by his predecessors: but in his Paradise Lost, when he soared "beyond the visible diurnal sphere," his deviation into blank verse was as judicious as fortunate; because his subject was then too sublime, his conceptions were too gigantic, for the narrow limits and demarcations of rhyme. Wherever much originality of thought exists, this metrical charm is unnecessary; and where imagination reigns in wild luxuriance, it is impertinent. In some of his juvenile poems, Milton appears to have been incumbered with the dignity of his thoughts; and Shakspeare, perplexed by the richness and variety of his combinations, is apt to become affected when he quits blank verse. Attempts have been made to enlarge the limits of blank verse, by the introduction of various measures analogous to those employed in rhyme: but to all these efforts the genius of our language discovers an invincible repugnance; vainly are varieties presented to the eye, which are imperceptible to the mind, and untasted by the ear. All rhymeless numbers either flow into good blank verse, or form lines harsh and intractable; a succession of abrupt sounds and mutilated sentences, which by no art of typography, by no imposition of nomenclature, can be made to constitute any metre at all.

CHAP. V.

Origin and Progess of Poetry.

HISTORY not only informs us, that Moses and Miriam, the first authors that are known to mankind, sung, on the borders of the Red Sea, a song of divine praise, to celebrate the deliverance which the Almighty had vouchsafed to the people of Israel, by opening a passage to them through the waters; but it has also transmitted to us the song itself, which is at once the most ancient monument, and a masterpiece, of poetic composition.

The Greeks, a people the most ingenious, the most animated, and in every sense the most accomplished, that the world ever produced, strove to ravish from the Hebrews the precious gift of poetry, which was vouchsafed them by the Supreme Author of all nature, that they might ascribe it to their false deities. According to their ingenious fictions, Apollo became the god of poetry; and dwelt on the hills of Phocis, Parnassus, and Helicon, whose feet were washed by the waters of Hippocrene, of which each mortal that ever drank was seized with a sacred delirium. The immortal swans floated on its waves.

Apollo was accompanied by the muses, those nine learned sisters, the daughters of Memory; and he was constantly attended by the Graces. Pegasus, his winged courser, transported him with a rapid flight into every region of the universe.

The literary annals of all nations afford vestiges of poetry from the remotest ages. They are found among the most savage of the ancient barbarians, and the most desolate of all the Americans. Nature asserts her rights in every country and every age. Tacitus mentions the verses and the hymns of the Germans, at the time when that rough people yet inhabited the woods, and while their manners were still savage. The first inhabitants of Runnia, and the other northern countries, those of Gaul, Albion, Iberia, Ausonia, and other nations of Europe, had their poetry; as well as the ancient people of Asia, and of the known borders of Africa.

That the higher order of poetry is not unattainable in an uncultivated age, is a truth eminently illustrated by the example of the Hebrew people. Admitting language to be, as Mr. Richardson ingeniously observes, the barometer of society, by which its comparative barbarism or civilization is indicated, it will be obvious that the bards of Sion composed their lofty songs for a primitive nation, tenacious of its customs and opinions, unenlightened by science, uncorrected by taste, and as little acquainted with the arts as the refinements of polished life.

The simplicity and energy of the Hebrew language, accorded happily with the sublime nature of sacred poetry; and to the peculiarities in its constitution it is perhaps owing, that the simple character of its composition is inseparably preserved, to whatever language transferred, or with whatever idioms assimilated. The musical harmony of the Hebrew language is now but imperfectly known; its prosody is, however, sufficiently understood to suggest a comparison between its rhymes, and the wild measures familiar to the Scandinavian nation. Alliteration was freely admitted in its verse, as were identical terminations and other artificial embellishments; but its distinctive feature was a symmetrical disposition of the sentences, which were cast into parallel verses of equal length, and correspondent in sense and sound: the sentiment expressed in the first distich being repeated and amplified in the second, as in the following examples: "The Lord rewardeth me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hand he hath recompensed me. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, and enlighteneth the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are pure and righteous altogether." This practice, which appears to have been peculiar to the Hebrews, was derived from their manner of worship; in which the sacred hymns were chaunted by bands of singers, who answered each other.

The Hebrew bards employ few epithets. The brevity of their style renders its sublimity conspicuous. Their imagery is bold and energetic; their magnificent conceptions issue from the mind in native majesty and strength; their imagination is ever rich and exuberant; and to them, metaphors spontaneously arise on every subject, in inexhaustible beauty and fertility.

Though Hebrew poetry presents nothing that in critical language can be classed with epic or dramatic composition, it affords innumerable examples of the lyric, the elegiac, and the didactic styles. In the Prophecies, the favourite figure is allegory: the Hebrews having, in common with other Oriental nations, a decided predilection for the parabolic species of writing. It would be injustice to the sacred bard, not to remember in what country he wrote,and with what people he lived. On examination, his images will be found to have been faithfully transcribed from nature, and beautifully to have harmonized with the scenes and manners familiar to his observation and experience; but the pure and uncorrupted theism maintained by the inspired poet, is his most exalted attribute, and is evidently the cause of his pre-eminence in sublimity over all other Oriental writers.

The Arabs were not, like the Hebrews, a stationary people, insulated from the rest of mankind. Alternately engaged in commerce and in war, their erratic chiefs visited distant regions; and in their intervals of leisure, were no less ambitious to obtain poetical distinction, than they had been to secure military fame.

Poetry, which constituted the sacred science of the Hebrews, became with the Arabs a polite accomplishment; and as the copiousness of their language supplied all the aptitudes of numbers, it is not surprizing that *improvisatori* bards should have been found in their deserts. The distich, and many other forms of metrical composition adapted to familiar occasions, were of Arabian invention; and it is the plausible suggestion of sir William Jones, that rhymes were borrowed from Eastern literature by the Provençal and Castilian poets, through whose influence they were naturalized to Europe. With all the copiousness and flexibility of the Arabic, the Persian language is found to possess an amenity and an elegance which render it eminently susceptible of poetical beauty. Its poets, like those of ancient Greece, have the power of rendering language subservient to their pleasure, and of clothing original conceptions in a new-created word.

Several Arabic and Persian poems are of the epic and dramatic cast; but the compositions most inviting to the European for translation, are those of an amatory, elegiac, or lyric character. In general, Oriental poetry deviates from the primitive simplicity so conspicuous in Hebrew compositions, and often degenerates into affectation and bombast. In its most admired authors indeed, a passion for the gaudy and gorgeous is ever predominant. The magnificence of their materials is disguised by their fantastic arrangement; and the eye which has dwelt with delight on the chaste graces of classical literature, soon turns with disgust from the jewelled turban and the "barbaric gold." There are however some passages, particularly in braminical poetry, which are perfectly simple and sublime: of these a noble specimen is given by sir William Jones in the Hymn to Narayena, or the Spirit of God; of which the following is the conclusion:

Omniscient Spirit, whose all-ruling power
  Bids from each sense bright emanations beam;
  Glows in the rainbow, sparkles in the stream,
Smiles in the bud, and glistens in the flower
That crowns each vernal bower;
Sighs in the gale, and warbles in the throat
  Of every bird that hails the bloomy Spring,
Or tells his love in many a liquid note,
  Whilst envious artists touch the rival string,
  Till rocks and forests ring;
Breathes in rich fragrance from the sandal grove,
Or where the precious musk-deer playful rove;
  In dulcet juice from clustering fruit distils,
And burns salubrious in the tasteful clove!
Soft banks and verdurous hills
Thy present influence fills;
In air, in floods, in caverns, woods, and plains,
Thy will inspirits all, thy sovereign Maya* reigns.

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* An Indian name for the operation of the Divine Spirit.

Blue crystal vault, and elemental fires,
That in th' ethereal fluid blaze and breathe;
Thou tossing main, whose snaky branches wreathe
This pensile orb with intertwisted gyres;
Mountains whose radiant spires
Presumptuous rear their summits to the skies,
And blend their emerald hue with sapphire light;
Smooth meads and lawns that glow with varying dyes
Of dew-bespangled leaves and blossoms bright;
Hence! vanish from my sight,
Delusive pictures, unsubstantial shows!
My soul absorb'd One only Being knows,
Of all perceptions One abundant source,
Whence every object every moment flows.
Suns hence derive their force,
Hence planets learn their course:
But suns and fading worlds I view no more;
God only I perceive, God only I adore.

The germs of genius scattered through Oriental compositions with wild luxuriance, appear in classical poetry displayed in full perfection and beauty. To what causes the pre-eminence of ancient Greece in this department of literature is to be attributed, it would here be futile to conjecture. From the susceptibility of his language, the poet was enabled to exhibit the same idea under a new aspect, and to give to every fluctuation of feeling a permanent expression. If the vivacity of his descriptions fascinated the imagination, his numbers dwelt with no less enchantment on the ear. The length and shortness of syllables in the Greek and Roman languages, which constituted their quantities, was determined by rules no less accurate than those of the notes in music; and on the proper distribution and adjustment of the quantities, the harmony of their metre depended. A stated interval of time was allowed to the pronunciation of every verse. To facilitate the labour of composition, artificial combinations of syllables (called feet) were invented; and by the number of these, and the quantities included in them, the character of the verse was ascertained.

To these combinations various names were given: the most important were the spondee, composed of two long syllables; and the dactyl, formed by one long and two short syllables. These were solely employed in the construction of the hexameter verse, of which an imitation has been vainly attempted in the English language. The pronunciation of the Greek and Latin languages is, indeed, almost as much lost to us, as that of the Hebrew; but such is the exquisite mechanism of their metre, that their verses cannot be read without producing a rich and often a melodious intonation, perceptible even to the unlettered ear.

In the happy regions of Greece, it is uncertain what species of poetry was first cultivated. Fables were compositions of great antiquity; the ode formed a part of religious worship; and the pastoral must have been introduced in an age sufficiently refined to relish simplicity. The immortal poems of Homer were composed at an early epoch of Grecian literature; and, as is well known, transmitted by oral tradition to a more polished age. Of this extraordinary man so much has been said, that it appears difficult to add any thing which would not now be trivial or impertinent. This arduous task the perseverance of modern criticism has, however, achieved; and a scholastic sect is now known to exist who would sacrilegiously remove the shrine of Homer from the temple of Fame, and abandon as if to superstitious credulity a name sanctified by the enthusiasm and veneration of preceding ages.

It is pretended that the Iliad and Odyssey were composed at different eras, by various authors; and that these desultory tales of Troy were at length collocated and edited by some ingenious critic, who might possibly have been distinguished by the appellation of Homer. The novelty, and perhaps the extravagance, of this hypothesis, have obtained for it partisans among those professed sceptics and separatists who can perceive no difference between vulgar errors and popular opinions, and whose ambition it is to recede as far as possible from all participation in the sentiments or conviction of other men. It is generally admitted that the excellence in which Homer stands unrivalled, is the energy of his conceptions, which gives to his personages, his scenes, and his descriptions, a real and individual existence. With such felicity are his characters cast, that no reader of feeling can be at a loss to conceive how

Achilles would look, or Nestor speak, or Ulysses act, on any imaginary occasion. The unprejudiced will decide whether such exquisite harmony of design could have been the result of chance, or whether each book had its separate Homer, or whether they were all planned and executed by one.

In lyrical composition, the most popular was the heroic ode. The name of Pindar has descended to us with honour; but the poems which inspired in his compatriots the most exalted enthusiasm, are but imperfectly understood by the student, and are almost impracticable to translation. The public recitation of the ode was accompanied by both music and dancing, a circumstance to which its structure was obviously adapted. The first two stanzas, called the strophe and the antistrophe, were of equal length. In the first part the performers approached the altars of the god; in the latter, the dance being inverted, they retraced each their steps to their former place, where, while they sung the epode, they stood still. It appears that this form was peculiar to the heroic ode. There were other lyrical compositions of a different cast. Sappho's poems breathe only tender impassioned sentiment: those of Anacreon, whether amatory or convivial, are equally remote from the sublimity of Pindar, and the melting softness of Sappho. The fervid imagination of Pindar is compared by Horace to the impetuosity of a mountain-torrent.

The heroic ode is evidently of dramatic character, and was the primitive source from which the regular drama was produced. Tragedy originated in the hymns sung in honour of Bacchus; and its name was derived from a Greek word signifying a goat, which was the victim consecrated to that deity. The invention of dialogue and action belongs to Eschylus. The original ode was preserved in the chorus, which constituted the popular part of the entertainment. The chorus, like the band of a modern orchestra, was composed of several persons who recited in a different manner from the other performers. We learn from Horace that their business was to deduce from the passing scene some lesson of morality, or to inculcate on the spectator some religious precept. The intervention of the chorus, which is now rejected by even the most zealous votaries of Greece, is not more repugnant however to our ideas of propriety, than many other usages of the ancient stage: for the performers appeared in masks; and in their recitations they were constantly accompanied by musical instruments, by which the voice was sustained, and the melody of the verse rendered sensible to an immense audience. The rules of the ancient drama were suited to its institution. The unities of time and place were necessary in a performance to which the auxiliary resources of modern machinery were wanting, and from which all the magical illusions of the modern scene were precluded. The tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles were masterpieces in their kind, but would now probably be little relished even by scholars and scholastic enthusiasts.

Comedy, like tragedy, originally consisted of a chorus, which derived its name from the god Comus. The rudiments of the comic art may perhaps be detected in the satyrs, a sort of interlude annexed to tragedies, in which the scene was rural, and the personages were Satyrs, or sylvan deities. In the plays of Aristophanes, living characters were introduced, and Socrates beheld himself ridiculed on the stage. This abuse a better taste corrected; and the comedies of Menander, which were imitated by Terence, exhibited only interesting pictures of domestic life. The chorus at first appendant on comedy, was gradually changed into the Prologue; a personage who carefully apprized the spectators of all they were to see on the stage.

The Roman writers modelled themselves on those of Greece, and it was long before they attempted to emulate their masters; yet Ennius, one of their elder poets, produced the satire, a species of miscellaneous poetry purely Roman, which was destined to receive perfection from Horace. With equal originality, Lucretius wrote his metaphysical poem, in which are developed the philosophical systems of his age; but it was not till the era of Augustus that the Latian bards established their equality with the Grecian. It was then that Horace, not satisfied with having transplanted all the lyric beauties to his odes, opened a rich vein of satiric poetry; and

Virgil, having equalled Theocritus, without temerity aspired to emulate Homer. In the Eneid, it may be acknowledged that he sometimes fell short of his master; his characters possess not the same features of durability and grandeur, nor are his scenes equally animated and dramatic. But to atone for these defects, he unites every charm that gives interest to narrative or lends enchantment to description: occasionally he rises to the sublime, but the beautiful is his natural element; he can excite terror, but he is more prone to inspire tenderness and pity. In the delicate touches of nature and pathos, he seems to have grown enamoured of his subject, and to have lingered affectionately on the endearing scenes and charities of domestic life. The first four books of the Eneid contain a tale so sweetly told, that if it were transferred to a rude language totally unsusceptible of the literary graces, it would still be read and remembered by all who had capacities for sympathy and tenderness.

In the Georgics, Virgil has left a model of didactic composition, ennobled by a strain of philosophical sentiment, pure, graceful, and persuasive. Ovid, whose talents were not less versatile than those of his contemporaries, adorned the fables of mythology with description, and illustrated in his Epistles almost every romantic story of antiquity. The style of his Elegies is not unlike that of his Epistles: he paints to the eye, but has often too much wit and fancy to touch the heart.

Tibullus has exceeded every other elegiac writer in simplicity and tenderness. Lucan and Statius were also epic poets; but they are seldom quoted, and not often read. Lucan possessed a genius of an exalted order: but his subject was peculiarly unfortunate; and his beauties are now neglected, because they are found in scenes repulsive to the imagination, and uncongenial to the feelings.

Among the last poets of Rome, appeared Juvenal and Persius, of whom the former was one of the most original writers she produced. He professes to exhibit a picture of his times; and there is in his manner an undissembled and almost a holy fervour that atones for his occasional ruggedness and asperity.

The primitive sources of modern poetry may be traced to the old Romance; whence was derived the simple Ballad so popular in England and Scotland, and under various names and forms universally adopted in Europe. On the revival of letters, when the study and imitation of the classics became the passion of literary men, their nomenclature was eagerly assumed; and volumes of poetry were soon composed, which the high-sounding names of odes, pastorals, satires, and epic poems, have not saved from oblivion: volumes of criticism were also compiled, to shew how pastorals, odes, and satires, ought to be written.

The Gothic nations who overran Rome, though ignorant of the polite arts, were not insensible to the charms of poetry. Their bards were no less venerated than their priests; and whatever instruction they received, whatever knowledge they possessed, were communicated in metre, and probably in rhyme.

In the age of Charlemagne, the minstrels of Provence (or, as they were called, the troubadours) introduced the metrical tales or ballads; which, from the dialect in which they were written, acquired the name of romances. Their poems were all composed in rhyme; but whether this practice was borrowed from the Arabs or the Goths, is uncertain. The Italian language (which, of all the corrupt dialects introduced by the barbarians, most assimilated with the Roman) soon acquired a tincture of elegance. In the middle ages Dante wrote; Ariosto followed; and Petrarch, the enthusiastical votary of classical genius, appeared among the first founders of modern literature. The passion for allegory, so long the characteristic of the Italian school, was by Chaucer rendered as prevalent in England as it had previously been on the continent. During several ages, Italy continued to be the Poets'-land of Europe; and in that interval was produced the Jerusalem Delivered, a poem not unworthy of a Roman bard, or an Augustan age.

In Spain, poetry was early cultivated, but with little attention to classical taste. In France, it emerged not from barbarism till the reign of Francis the First, and arrived at its ultimate point of perfection in the era of Louis the Fourteenth. La Fontaine and Boileau, Corneille and Racine, had then lived, and produced works destined to immortalize their names. Unfortunately for French poets, criticism was then almost coeval with poetry; and a pedantic attention to rules was soon permitted to repress the native energies of genius.

The modern drama, it is well known, originated in the Mysteries; a sort of religious farce, imported from the East. To the mysteries succeeded allegorical plays, called Moralities: these produced the Masque, which became the favourite amusement of the court in the time of Charles the First, and is redeemed from opprobrium and oblivion by Milton's Comus. Gondibert, written by lord Sackville, was the first tragedy represented on an English stage. Till the commencement of the eighteenth century, the German language was almost a stranger to poetry. Klopstock invented hexameter verse, in which the mechanism of classical numbers is rather perceived than felt by the reader. From that era, Germany has been more productive of books than all the rest of Europe; and during this period, many fine writers have arisen of real and original genius: but the literary commerce of the country is chiefly supported by translation.

MILTON.

Greece justly boasts of her Homer, Rome of her Virgil, and England of her Milton. As epic poets they will probably for ever remain unrivalled.

John Milton was the son of a respectable scrivener, who resided in Bread Street, London, where our poet was born, Dec. 9, 1608. The family originally sprang from Milton, in Oxfordshire, where they possessed an estate that was lost in the civil conflicts between the Yorkists and Lancastrians.

Milton was educated at St. Paul's school, and at the age of seventeen became a student of Christ's College, Cambridge, where he distinguished himself by his classical and poetical talents. His father having retired to Horton, in Buckinghamshire, after leaving college, the son spent some years there, in studious retirement, producing in this interval his "Comus," his "L'Allegro," "Penseroso," and "Lycidas," which alone would have rendered him immortal.

In 1638 he set out on his travels through France and Italy, where he was received with the respect due to his known talents; and returning a year after, established a seminary of education in Aldersgate Street, and married Mary, the daughter of Richard Powell, Esq. who soon after deserted him; but suing for a reconciliation, the torch of love burnt with brighter lustre than before.

From this period till the restoration Milton was deeply engaged in the unhappy politics of the times; and taking part with the parliament, published various polemical tracts in defence of the cause he had espoused. Such indeed was the zeal and industry with which he carried on his literary warfare, that his eyes began to be affected; and by degrees, a gutta serena totally deprived him of vision. Under those melancholy circumstances, he lost his first wife, who left him three daughters; and soon after a second wife, the daughter of a Captain Woodcock.

Having been some years secretary to Oliver Cromwell, on the death of the Protector he found it prudent to withdraw from the busy scene, and to consult his safety by concealment. His friends, however, interfered with so much zeal, that he was included in the general pardon; and removing from obscure lodgings to Jewin Street, he entered a third time into the bonds of wedlock.

Blind, infirm, and poor, he now resumed his "Paradise Lost," which had been sketched many years before; and finished this immortal poem at Chalfont, in Bucks, where he had retired from the plague of 1665. He sold the copy right for five pounds, with certain eventual conditions, which yielded about ten pounds more. Such have been, not, however, without some splendid exceptions, the rewards of genius in every age!

His "Paradise Regained," which adds nothing to his fame, and his "Sampson Agonistes," a play on the Greek model, were produced at subsequent intervals, and under every discouragement which might well depress the flame of poetic inspiration.

In his youth, Milton is said to have been eminently beautiful. His attainments were multifarious, and his memory tenacious. Worn out with repeated attacks of the gout, he resigned his breath with Christian composure and resignation, Nov. 10, 1674, and was buried in Cripplegate church. His fame can never die!

We have selected the following pieces from among the works of this writer, as possessed of the most acknowledged merit:

PARADISE LOST,
L'ALLEGRO,
IL PENSEROSO,
LYCIDAS, and
COMUS.

PARADISE LOST.

BOOK I.

THE ARGUMENT.

This First Book proposes, first in brief, the whole subject. Man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise, wherein he was placed: then touches the prime cause of his fall, the serpent or rather Satan in the serpent; who, revolting from God, and drawing to his side many legions of angels, was, by the command of God, driven out of heaven, with all his crew, into the great deep. Which action pass'd over, the Poem hastens into the midst of things, presenting Satan with his angels now fallen into hell, describ'd here not in the centre (for heaven and earth may be supposed as yet not made, certainly not yet accursed), but in a place of utter darkness, fitliest called Chaos: here Satan, with his angels lying on the burning lake, thunder-struck and astonish'd, after a certain space, recovers as from confusion, calls up him who next in order and dignity lay by him; they confer of their miserable fall. Satan awakens all his legions, who lay till then in the same manner confounded; they rise, their numbers, array of battle, their chief leaders nam'd, according to the idols known afterwards in Canaan and the countries adjoining. To these Satan directs his speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining heaven, but tells them, lastly, of a new world, and new kind of creature to be created, according to an ancient prophecy or report in heaven; for that angels were long before this visible creation, was the opinion of many ancient Fathers. To find out the truth of this prophecy, and what to determine thereon, he refers to a full council. What his associates thence attempt. Pandemonium the palace of Satan rises, suddenly built, out of the deep: the infernal peers there sit in council.

OF man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire

That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning, how the heav'ns and earth
Rose out of Chaos: or if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sats't brooding on the vast abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.
  Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view,
Nor the deep tract of Hell, say first what cause
Mov'd our grand parents, in that happy state,
Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off
From their Creator, and transgress his will,
For one restraint, lords of the world besides?
Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?
Th' infernal serpent; he it was, whose guile,
Stirr'd up with envy and revenge, deceiv'd
The mother of mankind, what time his pride
Had cast him out from heav'n, with all his host
Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,
He trusted to have equall'd the Most High,
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim,
Against the throne and monarchy of God
Rais'd impious war in heav'n and battle proud,
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,

Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.
Nine times the space that measures day and night
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquish'd, rolling in the fiery gulf
Confounded, though immortal: but his doom
Reserv'd him to more wrath; for now the thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain
Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes,
That witness'd huge affliction and dismay,
Mixt with obdurate pride and stedfast hate:
At once, as far as angels' ken, he views
The dismal situation waste and wild:
A dungeon horrible on all sides round
As one great furnace flam'd, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible,
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes,
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsum'd:
Such place eternal Justice had prepar'd
For those rebellious, here their prison ordain'd
In utter darkness, and their portion set
As far remov'd from God and light of heav'n
As from the centre thrice to th' utmost pole.
O how unlike the place from whence they fell!
There the companions of his fall, o'erwhelm'd
With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
He soon discerns, and welt'ring by his side
One next himself in pow'r, and next in crime,
Long after known in Palestine, and nam'd
Belzebub. To whom th' arch-enemy,
And thence in heav'n called Satan, with bold words
Breaking the horrid silence, thus began:
  If thou beest he; but O how fall'n! how chang'd
From him, who, in the happy realms of light,
Cloth'd with transcendent brightness, didst outshine
Myriads though bright! If he whom mutual league,
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
And hazard in the glorious enterprise,

Join'd with me once, now misery hath join'd
In equal ruin: into what pit thou seest,
From what height fall'n, so much the stronger prov'd
He with his thunder: and till then who knew
The force of those dire arms? yet not for those,
Nor what the potent Victor in his rage
Can else inflict, do I repent or change,
Though chang'd in outward lustre, that fix'd mind,
And high disdain from sense of injur'd merit,
That with the Mightiest rais'd me to contend,
And to the fierce contention brought along
Innumerable force of spirits arm'd,
That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,
His utmost pow'r with adverse pow'r oppos'd
In dubious battle on the plains of Heav'n,
And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; th' unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield,
And what is else, not to be overcome?
That glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
With suppliant knee, and deify his power,
Who from the terror of this arm so late
Doubted his empire; that were low indeed;
That were an ignominy, and shame beneath
This downfal; since by fate the strength of gods
And this empyreal substance cannot fail,
Since through experience of this great event,
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanc'd,
We may with more successful hope resolve
To wage by force or guile eternal war,
Irreconcileable to our grand Foe,
Who now triumphs, and in th' excess of joy
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of heav'n.
So spake the apostate angel, though in pain,
Vaunting aloud, but rack'd with deep despair;
And him thus answer'd soon his bold compeer:
O Prince! O chief of many throned powers,
That led th' embattl'd seraphim to war
Under thy conduct, and in dreadful deeds

Fearless, endanger'd heav'n's perpetual King,
And put to proof his high supremacy,
Whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate,
Too well I see and rue the dire event,
That with sad overthrow and foul defeat
Hath lost us heaven. and all this mighty host
In horrible destruction laid thus low,
As far as gods and heav'nly essences
Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains
Invincible, and vigour soon returns,
Though all our glory extinct, and happy state
Here swallow'd up in endless misery.
But what if he our Conqueror (whom I now
Of force believe Almighty, since no less
Than such could have o'erpow'r'd such force as ours)
Have left us this our spirit and strength entire
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,
Or do him mightier service as his thralls
By right of war, whate'er his business be,
Here in the heart of hell to work in fire,
Or do his errands in the gloomy deep;
What can it then avail, though yet we feel
Strength undiminish'd, or eternal being
To undergo eternal punishment?
Whereto with speedy words th' arch-fiend reply'd:
  Fallen Cherub, to be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering: but of this be sure,
To do aught good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist. If then his providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil;
Which oft-times may succeed, so as perhaps
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from their destined aim.
But see the angry Victor hath recall'd
His ministers of vengeance and pursuit
Back to the gates of heav'n: the sulph'rous hail

Shot after us in storm, o'erblown, hath laid
The fiery surge, that from the precipice
Of heav'n receiv'd us falling; and the thunder
Wing'd with red lightning and impetuous rage,
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.
Let us not slip th' occassion, whether scorn,
Or satiate fury yield it from our foe.
Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,
The seat of desolation, void of light,
Save what the glimmering of these vivid flames
Casts pale and dreadful? thither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves;
There rest, if any rest can harbour there,
And re-assembling our afflicted powers,
Consult how we may henceforth most offend
Our enemy, our own loss how repair,
How overcome this dire calamity,
What reinforcement we may gain from hope,
If not what resolution from despair.
  Thus Satan, talking to his nearest mate,
With head up-lift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blaz'd, his other parts besides
Prone on the flood, extended long and large,
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,
Briareus or Typhon, whom the den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' ocean stream:
Him haply slumb'ring on the Norway foam
The pilot of some small night-founder'd skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wished morn delays:
So stretch'd out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay
Chain'd on the burning lake, nor ever thence
Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven,

Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shewn
On man by him seduc'd; but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.
Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
His mighty stature; on each hand the flames
Driven backward slope their pointing spires, and roll'd
In billows, leave i' th' midst a horrid vale.
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air
That felt unusual weight, till on dry land
He lights, if it were land that ever burn'd
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire;
And such appear'd in hue, as when the force
Of subterranean wind transports a hill
Torn from Pelorus, or the shatter'd side
Of thundering Ætna, whose combustible
And fuel'd entrails thence conceiving fire,
Sublim'd with mineral fury, aid the winds
And leave a singed bottom all involv'd
With stench and smoke: such resting found the sole
Of unblest feet. Him followed his next mate,
Both glorying to have 'scap'd the Stygian flood
As gods, and by their own recover'd strength,
Not by the suff'rance of supernal Power.
  Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,
Said then the lost Arch-angel, this the seat
That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
Who now is Sov'reign, can dispose and bid
What shall be right: farthest from him is best,
Whom reason hath equall'd, force hath made supreme
Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells: Hail horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new possessor; one who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself

Can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less than he
Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; th' Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure, and, in my choice,
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heav'n.
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
Th' associates and copartners of our loss,
Lie thus astonish'd on th' oblivious pool,
And call them not to share with us their part
In this unhappy mansion, or once more,
With rallied arms, to try what may be yet
Regain'd in heav'n, or what more lost in hell?
  So Satan spake, and him Belzebub
Thus answer'd: Leader of those armies bright,
Which but th' Omnipotent none could have foil'd,
If once they hear that voice, their liveliest pledge
Of hope in fears and dangers, heard so oft
In worst extremes, and on the perilous edge
Of battle when it rag'd, in all assaults
Their surest signal, they will soon resume
New courage, and revive; though now they lie
Grovelling and prostrate on yon lake of fire,
As we e'er while, astounded and amaz'd,
No wonder, fall'n such a pernicious height.
  He scarce had ceas'd, when the superior Fiend
Was moving tow'rd the shore; his pond'rous shield,
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At evening from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers or mountains on her spotty globe.
His spear, to equal which the tallest pine,
Hewn on Norwegian hills to be the mast
Of some great ammiral, were but a wand,
He walk'd with to support uneasy steps
Over the burning marle, not like those steps

On heav'n's azure, and the torrid clime
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with fire;
Nathless he so endur'd, till on the beach
Of that inflamed sea he stood, and call'd
His legions, angel forms, who lay entranc'd
Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Valambrosa, where th' Etrurian shades
High over-arch'd embow'r; or scatter'd sedge
Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion arm'd
Hath vex'd the Red-sea coast, whose waves o'erthrew
Busiris and his Memphian chivalry,
While with perfidious hatred they pursued
The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
From the safe shore their floating carcases
And broken chariot wheels: so thick bestrown,
Abject and lost lay these, covering the flood,
Under amazement of their hideous change.
He call'd so loud, that all the hollow deep
Of hell resounded. Princes, Potentates,
Warriors, the flow'r of heav'n, once yours, now lost,
If such astonishment as this can seize
Eternal spirits; or have ye chosen this place,
After the toil of battle, to repose
Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find
To slumber here, as in the vales of Heav'n?
Or in this abject posture have ye sworn
To adore the Conqueror? who now beholds
Cherub and seraph rolling in the flood
With scatter'd arms and ensigns, till anon
His swift pursuers from heav'n gates discern
Th' advantage, and descending tread us down
Thus drooping, or with linked thunderbolts
Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf.
Awake, arise, or be for ever fallen!
They heard, and were abash'd, and up they sprung
Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch
On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,
Rouse and bestir themselves e'er well awake.
Nor did they not perceive the evil plight
In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel;
Yet to their General's voice they soon obey'd,
Innumerable. As when the potent rod

Of Amram's son, in Egypt's evil day,
Wav'd round the coast, up call'd a pitchy cloud
Of locusts, warping on the eastern wind,
That o'er the realm of impious Pharaoh hung
Like night, and darken'd all the land of Nile:
So numberless were those bad angels seen,
Hovering on wing under the cope of Hell,
'Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding fires;
Till, as a signal giv'n, th' uplifted spear
Of their great Sultan waving to direct
Their course, in even balance down they light
On the firm brimstone, and fill all the plain;
A multitude, like which the populous North
Pour'd never from her frozen loins, to pass
Rhene or the Danaw, when her barb'rous sons
Came like a deluge on the South, and spread
Beneath Gibraltar to the Lybian sands.
Forthwith from every squadron and each band
The heads and leaders thither haste, where stood
Their great Commander; godlike shapes and forms
Excelling human, princely dignities,
And powers that erst in Heaven sat on thrones;
Though of their names in heav'nly records now
Be no memorial, blotted out and ras'd
By their rebellion from the books of Life.
Nor had they yet among the sons of Eve
Got them new names, till wandring o'er the earth,
Through God's high suff'rance for the trial of man,
By falsities and lies the greatest part
Of mankind they corrupted to forsake
God their Creator, and th' invisible
Glory of him that made them to transform
Oft to the image of a brute, adorn'd
With gay religions full of pomp and gold,
And devils to adore for deities:
Then were they known to men by various names,
And various idols through the heathen world.
Say, Muse, their names then known, who first, who last,
Rous'd from the slumber, on that fiery couch,
At their great Emp'ror's call, as next in worth
Came singly where he stood on the bare strand,
While the promiscuous crowd stood yet aloof.

The chief were those who from the pit of Hell
Roaming to seek their prey on earth, durst fix
Their seats long after next the seat of God,
Their altars by his altar, gods ador'd
Among the nations round, and durst abide
Jehovah thund'ring out of Sion, thron'd
Between the cherubim; yea often plac'd
Within his sanctuary itself their shrines,
Abominations; and with cursed things
His holy rites and solemn feasts profan'd,
And with their darkness durst affront his light.
First Moloch, horrid king, besmear'd with blood
Of human sacrifice, and parent's tears,
Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud
Their children's cries unheard, that pass'd through fire
To his grim idol. Him the Ammonite
Worshipp'd in Rabba and her wat'ry plain,
In Argob and in Basan, to the stream
Of utmost Arnon. Nor content with such
Audacious neighbourhood, the wisest heart
Of Solomon he led by fraud to build
His temple right against the temple of God,
On the opprobrious hill, and made his grove
The pleasant valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence
And black Gehenna call'd, the type of Hell.
Next Chemos, th' obscene dread of Moab's sons,
From Aroar to Nebo, and the wild
Of southmost Abarim; in Hesebon
And Horonaim, Seon's realm, beyond
The flow'ry dale of Sibma, clad with vines,
And Elëalé to th' Asphaltic pool.
Peor his other name, when he entic'd
Israel in Sittim on their march from Nile
To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe.
Yet thence his lustful orgies he enlarg'd
Ev'n to that hill of scandal, by the grove
Of Moloch homicide; lust hard by hate;
Till good Josiah drove them thence to Hell.
With these came they, who from the bord'ring flood
Of old Euphrates to the brook that parts
Egypt from Syrian ground, had general names
Of Baalim and Ashtaroth, those male,

These feminine. For spirits, when they please,
Can either sex assume, or both; so soft
And uncompounded is their essence pure,
Not ty'd or manacl'd with joint or limb,
Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,
Like cumb'rous flesh; but in what shape they choose
Dilated or condens'd, bright or obscure,
Can execute their airy purposes,
And works of love or enmity fulfil.
For those the race of Israel oft forsook
Their living strength, and unfrequented left
His righteous altar, bowing lowly down
To bestial Gods; for which their heads as low
Bow'd down in battle, sunk before the spear
Of despicable foes. With these in troop
Came Astoreth, whom the Phœnicians call'd
Astarte, Queen of Heav'n, with crescent horns;
To whose bright image nightly by the moon
Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs;
In Sion also not unsung, where stood
Her temple on th' offensive mountain, built
By that uxorious king, whose heart, though large,
Beguil'd by fair idolatresses, fell
To idols foul. Tammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allur'd
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
In amorous ditties all a summer's day;
While smooth Adonis from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea, suppos'd with blood
Of Tammuz yearly wounded; the love-tale
Infected Sion's daughters with like heat,
Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch
Ezekiel saw, when by the vision led
His eye survey'd the dark idolatries
Of alienated Judah. Next came one
Who mourned in earnest, when the captive ark
Maim'd his brute image, head and hands lopt off
In his own temple, on the grunsel edge,
Where he fell flat, and sham'd his worshippers:
Dagon his name, sea-monster, upward man
And downward fish: yet had his temple high
Rear'd in Azotus, dreaded through the coast

Of Palestine, in Gath and Ascalon,
And Accaron and Gaza's frontier bounds.
Him follow'd Rimmon, whose delightful seat
Was fair Damascus, on the fertile banks
Of Abbana and Pharphar, lucid streams.
He also against the house of God was bold:
A leper once he lost, and gain'd a king,
Ahaz his sottish conqu'ror, whom he drew
God's altar to disparage and displace
For one of Syrian mode, whereon to burn
His odious offerings, and adore the Gods
Whom he had vanquish'd. After these appear'd
A crew, who, under names of old renown,
Osiris, Isis, Orus and their train,
With monstrous shapes and sorceries abus'd
Fanatic Egypt and her priests, to seek
Their wand'ring gods disguis'd in brutish forms
Rather than human. Nor did Israel 'scape
Th' infection, when their borrow'd gold compos'd
The calf in Oreb; and the rebel king
Doubled that sin in Bethel and in Dan,
Likening his Maker to the grazed ox,
Jehovah, who in one night when he pass'd
From Egypt marching, equall'd with one stroke
Both her first-born and all her bleating gods.
Belial came last, than whom a sp'rit more lewd
Fell not from heaven, or more gross to love
Vice for itself: to him no temple stood
Nor altar smok'd; yet who more oft than he
In temples and at altars, when the priest
Turns atheist, as did Eli's sons, who filled
With lust and violence the house of God?
In courts and palaces he also reigns,
And in luxurious cities, where the noise
Of riot ascends above their loftiest towers,
And injury and outrage: and when Night
Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.
Witness the streets of Sodom, and that night
In Gibeah, when the hospitable door
Expos'd a matron to avoid worse rape.
These were the prime in order and in might;

The rest were long to tell, though far renown'd,
Th' Ionian gods of Javan's issue, held
Gods, yet confessed later than Heav'n and Earth
Their boasted parents: Titan, Heav'n's first-born,
With his enormous brood, and birthright seiz'd
By younger Saturn; he from mightier Jove
His own and Rhea's son like measure found;
So Jove usurping reign'd: these first in Crete
And Ida known, thence on the snowy top
Of cold Olympus rul'd the middle air,
Their highest heav'n; or on the Delphian cliff,
Or in Dodona, and through all the bounds
Of Doric land; or who with Saturn old
Fled over Adria to th' Hesperian fields,
And o'er the Celtic roam'd the utmost isles.
  All these and more came flocking; but with looks
Downcast and damp, yet such wherein appear'd
Obscure some glimpse of joy, t' have found their chief
Not in despair, t' have found themselves not lost
In loss itself; which on his countenance cast
Like doubtful hue: but he his wonted pride
Soon recollecting, with high words that bore
Semblance of worth, not substance, gently rais'd
Their fainting courage, and dispell'd their fears.
Then straight commands, that at the warlike sound
Of trumpets loud and clarions be uprear'd
His mighty standard; that proud honour claim'd
Azazel as his right, a cherub tall;
Who forthwith from the glittering staff unfurl'd
Th' imperial ensign, which full high advanc'd
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind,
With gems and golden lustre rich emblaz'd,
Seraphic arms and trophies; all the while
Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds:
At which the universal host up sent
A shout that tore Hell's concave, and beyond
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.
All in a moment through the gloom were seen
Ten thousand banners rise into the air
With orient colours waving: with them rose
A forest huge of spears; and thronging helms
Appear'd, and serried shields in thick array

Of depth immeasurable: anon they move
In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood
Of flutes and soft recorders; such as rais'd
To height of noblest temper heroes old
Arming to battle; and instead of rage
Deliberate valour breath'd, firm and unmov'd
With dread of death to flight or foul retreat;
Nor wanting pow'r to mitigate or swage
With solemn touches troubled thoughts, and chase
Anguish, and doubt, and fear, and sorrow, and pain,
From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they,
Breathing united force, with fixed thought
Mov'd on in silence to soft pipes that charm'd
Their painful steps o'er the burnt soil; and now
Advanc'd in view, they stand, a horrid front
Of dreadful length and dazzling arms, in guise
Of warriors old with order'd spear and shield,
Awaiting what command their mighty chief
Had to impose; he through the armed files
Darts his experienc'd eye, and soon traverse
The whole battalion, views their order due,
Their visages and stature, as of gods;
Their number last he sums. And now his heart
Distends with pride, and hard'ning in his strength
Glories: for never since created man
Met such embodied force, as nam'd with these
Could merit more than that small infantry
Warr'd on by cranes; though all the giant brood
Of Phlegra with th' heroic race were join'd
That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side
Mix'd with auxiliar Gods; and what resounds
In fable or romance of Uther's son,
Begirt with British or Armoric knights;
And all who since, baptiz'd or infidel,
Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,
Damasco, or Morocco, or Trebisond,
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric's shore
When Charlemain, with all his peerage, fell
By Fontarabia. Thus far these beyond
Compare of mortal prowess, yet observ'd
Their dread Commander: he above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,

Stood like a tower; his form had yet not lost
All her original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than Arch-angel ruin'd, and th' excess
Of glory obscur'd; as when the sun new risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon
In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs. Darken'd so, yet shone
Above them all th' Arch-angel; but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride
Waiting revenge: cruel his eye, but cast
Signs of remorse and passion to behold
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather
(Far other once beheld in bliss) condemn'd
For ever now to have their lot in pain;
Millions of spirits for his fault amerc'd
Of Heav'n, and from eternal splendors flung
For his revolt, yet faithful, how they stood,
Their glory wither'd: as when Heaven's fire
Hath scath'd the forest oaks, or mountain pines,
With singed top their stately growth, though bare,
Stands on the blasted heath. He now prepar'd
To speak; whereat their doubled ranks they bend
From wing to wing, and half inclose him round
With all his peers: attention held them mute.
Thrice he essay'd, and thrice in spite of scorn,
Tears such as angels weep, burst forth: at last
Words, interwove with sighs, found out their way.
O myriads of immortal Sp'rits! O Powers
Matchless! but with th' Almighty, and that strife
Was not inglorious, though th' event was dire,
As this place testifies, and this dire change,
Hateful to utter: but what pow'r of mind
Foreseeing or presaging, from the depth
Of knowledge past or present, could have fear'd,
How such united force of gods, how such
As stood like these, could ever know repulse?
For who can yet believe, though after loss,
That all these puissant legions, whose exile

Hath emptied Heav'n, shall fail to re-ascend,
Self-rais'd, and repossess their native seat?
For me be witness, all the host of heaven,
If counsels different, or dangers shunn'd
By me, have lost our hopes. But he who reigns
Monarch in Heav'n, till then as one secure
Sat on his throne, upheld by old repute
Consent or custom, and his regal state
Put forth at full; but still his strength conceal'd,
Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall.
Henceforth his might we know, and know our own,
So as not either to provoke, or dread
New war, provok'd; our better part remains
To work in close design, by fraud or guile,
What force effected not; that he no less
At length from us may find, who overcomes
By force, hath overcome but half his foe.
Space may produce new worlds; whereof so rife
There went a fame in Heav'n, that he e'er long
Intended to create, and therein plant
A generation, whom his choice regard
Should favour equal to the sons of Heav'n:
Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps
Our first eruption, thither or elsewhere:
For this infernal pit shall never hold
Celestial sp'rits in bondage, nor th' abyss
Long under darkness cover. But these thoughts
Full counsel must mature: peace is despair'd,
For who can think submission? War then, war,
Open or understood, must be resolv'd.
  He spake: and to confirm his words, out flew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty cherubim; the sudden blaze
Far round illumin'd Hell: highly they rag'd
Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped arms
Clash'd on their sounding shields the din of war,
Hurling defiance tow'rd the vault of heav'n.
  There stood a hill not far, whose grisly top
Belch'd fire and rolling smoke; the rest entire
Shone with a glossy scurf, undoubted sign
That in his womb was hid metallic ore,
The work of sulphur. Thither wing'd with speed

A numerous brigade hasten'd: as when bands
Of pioneers, with spade and pick-axe arm'd,
Forerun the royal camp, to trench a field,
Or cast a rampart. Mammon led them on,
Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
From Heav'n, for ev'n in Heav'n his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heav'n's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine, or holy else enjoy'd
In vision beatific: by him first
Men also, and by his suggestion taught,
Ransack'd the centre, and with impious hands
Rifled the bowels of their mother Earth
For treasures better hid. Soon had his crew
Open'd into the hill a spacious wound,
And digg'd out ribs of gold. Let none admire
That riches grow in Hell: that soil may best
Deserve the precious bane. And here let those
Who boast in mortal things, and wond'ring tell
Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,
Learn how their greatest monuments of fame,
And strength, and art, are easily out-done
By spirits reprobate, and in an hour
What in an age they with incessant toil,
And hands innumerable, scarce perform.
Nigh on the plain in many cells prepar'd,
That underneath had veins of liquid fire
Sluic'd from the lake, a second multitude
With wondrous art found out the massy ore,
Sev'ring each kind, and scumm'd the bullion dross;
A third as soon had form'd within the ground
A various mould, and from the boiling cells,
By strange conveyance, fill'd each hollow nook,
As in an organ from one blast of wind
To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes.
Anon, out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet,
Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven;

The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon,
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
Equall'd in all their glories, to inshrine
Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat
Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxury. Th' ascending pile
Stood fix'd her stately height, and straight the doors
Opening their brazen folds, discover wide
Within her ample spaces o'er the smooth
And level pavement: from the arched roof
Pendent by subtle magic, many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
With Naphtha and Asphaltus, yielded light
As from a sky. The hasty multitude
Admiring enter'd, and the work some praise,
And some the architect: his hand was known
In Heav'n by many a tow'red structure high,
Where scepter'd angels held their residence,
And sat as princes, whom the supreme king,
Exalted to such power, and gave to rule,
Each in his hierarchy, the orders bright.
Nor was his name unheard or unador'd
In ancient Greece; and in Ausonian land
Men call'd him Mulciber; and how he fell
From heav'n they fabled, thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements: from morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day; and with the setting sun
Dropt from the zenith, like a falling star,
On Lemnos th' Ægean isle: thus they relate,
Erring; for he with this rebellious rout
Fell long before; nor aught avail'd him now
T' have built in Heaven high tow'rs; nor did he 'scape
By all his engines, but was headlong sent,
With his industrious crew, to build in Hell.
Meanwhile the winged heralds by command
Of sov'reign pow'r, with awful ceremony
And trumpet's sound, throughout the host proclaim
A solemn council forthwith to be held
At Pandemonium, the high capital
Of Satan and his peers: their summons call'd
From every band and squared regiment

By place or choice the worthiest; they anon
With hundreds and with thousands trooping came
Attended: all access was throng'd, the gates,
And porches wide, but chief the spacious hall
(Though like a cover'd field, where champions bold
Wont ride in arm'd, and at the Soldan's chair
Defy'd the best of Panim chivalry
To mortal combat, or career with lance)
Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and in the air
Brush'd with the hiss of rustling wings. As bees
In spring-time, when the sun with Taurus rides,
Pour forth their populous youth about the hive
In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers
Fly to and fro, or on the smoothed plank,
The suburb of their straw-built citadel,
New rubb'd with balm, expatiate and confer
Their state affairs. So thick the airy crowd
Swarm'd and were straiten'd; till, the signal given,
Behold a wonder! they but now who seem'd
In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons,
Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room
Throng numberless, like that Pygmean race
Beyond the Indian mount, or fairy elves,
Whose midnight revels by a forest side
Or fountain some belated peasant sees,
Or dreams he sees, while over-head the moon
Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
Wheels her pale course; they on their mirth and dance
Intent with jocund music charm his ear;
At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.
Thus incorporeal sp'rits to smallest forms
Reduc'd their shapes immense, and were at large,
Though without number still amidst the hall
Of that infernal court. But far within,
And in their own dimensions like themselves,
The great seraphic lords and cherubim
In close recess and secret conclave, sat;
A thousand demi-gods on golden seats,
Frequent and full. After short silence then,
And summons read, the great consult began.

PARADISE LOST.

BOOK II.

THE ARGUMENT.

The consultation begun, Satan debates whether another battle be to be hazarded for the recovery of Heaven: some advise it, others dissuade. A third proposal is preferr'd, mentioned before by Satan, to search the truth of that prophecy or tradition in Heaven concerning another world, and another kind of creature, equal or not much inferior to themselves, about this time to be created: their doubt who shall be sent on this difficult search. Satan, their chief, undertakes alone the voyage, is honour'd and applauded. The council thus ended, the rest betake them several ways, and to several employments, as their inclinations lead them, to entertain the time till Satan return. He passes on his journey to Hell gates, finds them shut, and who sat there to guard them, by whom at length they are open'd and discover to him the gulf between Hell and Heaven; with what difficulty he passes through, directed by Chaos, the power of that place, to the sight of this new world which he sought.

HIGH on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous east with richest hand
Show'rs on her kings Barbaric pearl and gold,
Satan exalted sat, by merit rais'd
To that bad eminence; and from despair
Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
Vain war with heav'n, and, by success untaught,
His proud imaginations thus display'd.
  Pow'rs and dominions, deities of Heav'n,
For since no deep within her gulph can hold
Immortal vigour, though oppress'd and fall'n,
I give not heav'n for lost. From this descent
Celestial virtues rising, will appear
More glorious and more dread than from no fall,
And trust themselves to fear no second fate.
Me though just right, and the fix'd laws of Heav'n
Did first create your leader, next free choice,

With what besides, in counsel or in fight,
Hath been achiev'd of merit, yet this loss,
Thus far at least recover'd, hath much more
Establish'd in a safe unenvied throne,
Yielded with full consent. The happier state
In heav'n, which follows dignity, might draw
Envy from each inferior; but who here
Will envy whom the highest place exposes
Foremost to stand against the thund'rer's aim,
Your bulwark, and condemns to greatest share
Of endless pain? where there is then no good
For which to strive, no strife can grow up there
From faction; for none sure will claim in hell
Precedence; none, whose portion is so small
Of present pain, that with ambitious mind
Will covet more. With this advantage then
To union, and firm faith, and firm accord,
More than can be in Heaven, we now return
To claim our just inheritance of old,
Surer to prosper than prosperity
Could have assur'd us; and by what best way,
Whether of open war or covert guile,
We now debate; who can advise may speak.
He ceas'd; and next him Moloch, scepter'd king,
Stood up, the strongest and the fiercest spirit
That fought in heaven, now fiercer by despair;
His trust was with th' Eternal to be deem'd
Equal in strength, and rather than be less
Car'd not to be at all; with that care lost
Went all his fear: of God, or hell, or worse
He reck'd not, and these words thereafter spake:
My sentence is for open war: of wiles,
More unexpert, I boast not: them let those
Contrive who need, or when they need, not now.
For while they sit contriving, shall the rest,
Millions that stand in arms, and longing wait
The signal to ascend, sit ling'ring here
Heav'n's fugitives, and for their dwelling place
Accept this dark opprobrious den of shame,
The prison of his tyranny who reigns
By our delay? No, let us rather choose,

Arm'd with hell flames and fury, all at once
O'er heav'n's high tow'rs to force resistless way,
Turning our tortures into horrid arms
Against the tort'rer: when to meet the noise
Of his almighty engine he shall hear
Infernal thunder, and for lightning see
Black fire and horror shot with equal rage
Among his angels, and his throne itself
Mix'd with Tartarean sulphur, and strange fire,
His own invented torments. But, perhaps,
The way seems difficult and steep to scale
With upright wing against a higher foe.
Let such bethink them, if the sleepy drench
Of that forgetful lake benumb not still,
That in our proper motion we ascend
Up to our native seat: descent and fall
To us is adverse. Who but felt of late,
When the fierce foe hung on our broken rear,
Insulting, and pursued us through the deep,
With what compulsion and laborious flight
We sunk thus low? Th' ascent is easy then;
Th' event is fear'd; should we again provoke
Our stronger, some worse way his wrath may find
To our destruction; if there be in hell
Fear to be worse destroy'd: what can be worse
Than to dwell here, driv'n out from bliss, condemn'd
In this abhorred deep to utter woe;
Where pain of unextinguishable fire
Must exercise us, without hope of end,
The vassals of his anger, when the scourge
Inexorably, and the torturing hour
Calls us to penance? More destroy'd than thus,
We should be quite abolish'd, and expire.
What fear we then? what doubt we to incense
His utmost ire? which, to the height enrag'd,
Will either quite consume us, and reduce
To nothing this essential, happier far
Than miserable to have eternal being:
Or if our substance be indeed divine,
And cannot cease to be, we are at worst
On this side nothing; and by proof we feel

Our pow'r sufficient to disturb his heav'n,
And with perpetual inroads to alarm,
Though inaccessible, his fatal throne:
Which, if not victory, is yet revenge.
He ended frowning, and his look denounc'd
Desp'rate revenge, and battle dangerous
To less than gods. On th' other side up rose
Belial, in act more graceful and humane;
A fairer person lost not heav'n; he seem'd
For dignity compos'd, and high exploit:
But all was false and hollow; though his tongue
Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash
Maturest counsels: for his thoughts were low,
To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
Tim'rous and slothful: yet he pleas'd the ear,
And with persuasive accent thus began:
I should be much for open war, O Peers,
As not behind in hate, if what was urg'd
Main reason to persuade immediate war,
Did not dissuade me most, and seem to cast
Ominous conjecture on the whole success:
When he who most excels in fact of arms,
In what he counsels, and in what excels,
Mistrustful, grounds his courage on despair
And utter dissolution, as the scope
Of all his aim, after some dire revenge.
First, what revenge? the towers of heav'n are fill'd
With armed watch, that render all access
Impregnable; oft on the bord'ring deep
Encamp their legions, or with obscure wing
Scout far and wide into the realm of night,
Scorning surprise. Or could we break our way
By force, and at our heels all hell should rise
With blackest insurrection, to confound
Heav'n's purest light, yet our great enemy,
All incorruptible, would on his throne
Sit unpolluted, and th' ethereal mould,
Incapable of stain, would soon expel
Her mischief, and purge off the baser fire,
Victorious. Thus repuls'd, our final hope

Is flat despair: we must exasperate
Th' almighty victor to spend all his rage;
And that must end us, that must be our cure,
To be no more. Sad cure! for who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated night,
Devoid of sense and motion? and who knows,
Let this be good, whether our angry foe
Can give it, or will ever? how he can,
Is doubtful; that he never will, is sure.
Will he, so wise, let loose at once his ire,
Belike through impotence, or unaware,
To give his enemies their wish, and end
Them in his anger, whom his anger saves
To punish endless? Wherefore cease we then?
Say they who counsel war, we are decreed,
Reserv'd, and destin'd to eternal woe,
Whatever doing: what can we suffer more,
What can we suffer worse? Is this then worst,
Thus sitting, thus consulting, thus in arms?
What, when we fled amain, pursu'd and struck
With heaven's afflicting thunder, and besought
The deep to shelter us? this hell then seem'd
A refuge from those wounds: or when we lay
Chain'd on the burning lake? that sure was worse.
What, if the breath that kindled those grim fires,
Awak'd, should blow them into sevenfold rage,
And plunge us in the flames? or from above,
Should intermitted vengeance arm again
His red right hand to plague us? what, if all
Her stores were open'd, and this firmament
Of hell should spout her cataracts of fire,
Impendent horrors, threat'ning hideous fall
One day upon our heads; while we, perhaps,
Designing or exhorting glorious war,
Caught in a fiery tempest, shall be hurl'd
Each on his rock transfix'd, the sport and prey
Of wracking whirlwinds, or for ever sunk
Under yon boiling ocean, wrapt in chains;

There to converse with everlasting groans,
Unrespited, unpitied, unrepriev'd,
Ages of hopeless end! this would be worse.
War, therefore, open or conceal'd, alike
My voice dissuades; for what can force or guile
With him, or who deceive his mind, whose eye
Views all things at one view? he from heav'n's height
All these our motions vain sees and derides;
Not more almighty to resist our might,
Than wise to frustrate all our plots and wiles.
Shall we then live thus vile, the race of heaven,
Thus trampled, thus expell'd to suffer here
Chains and these torments? better these than worse
By my advice; since fate inevitable
Subdues us, and omnipotent decree,
The victor's will. To suffer, as to do,
Our strength is equal, nor the law unjust
That so ordains: this was at first resolv'd,
If we were wise, against so great a foe
Contending, and so doubtful what might fall.
I laugh, when those who at the spear are bold
And vent'rous, if that fail them, shrink and fear
What yet they know must follow, to endure
Exile, or ignominy, or bonds, or pain,
The sentence of their conqueror: this is now
Our doom; which if we can sustain and bear,
Our supreme foe in time may much remit
His anger, and perhaps, thus far remov'd,
Not mind us, not offending, satisfy'd
With what is punish'd; whence these raging fires
Will slacken, if his breath stir not their flames.
Our purer essence then will overcome
Their noxious vapour, or, inur'd, not feel,
Or chang'd at length, and to the place conform'd
In temper and in nature, will receive
Familiar the fierce heat, and void of pain;
This horror will grow mild' this darkness light,
Besides what hope the never-ending flight
Of future days may bring, what chance, what change
Worth waiting, since our present lot appears
For happy though but ill, for ill not worst,

If we procure not to ourselves more woe.
Thus Belial, with words cloth'd in reason's garb,
Counsel'd ignoble ease, and peaceful sloth,
Not peace: and after him thus Mammon spake:
Either to disenthrone the King of heav'n
We war, if war be best, or to regain
Our own right lost: him to unthrone we then
May hope, when everlasting fate shall yield
To fickle chance, and Chaos judge the strife:
The former vain to hope, argues as vain
The latter: for what place can be for us
Within heav'n's bound, unless heav'n's Lord supreme
We overpow'r? Suppose he should relent,
And publish grace to all, on promise made
Of new subjection; with what eyes could we
Stand in his presence humble, and receive
Strict laws impos'd to celebrate his throne
With warbled hymns, and to his Godhead sing
Forc'd hallelujahs; while he lordly sits
Our envied Sov'reign, and his altar breathes
Ambrosial odours and ambrosial flowers,
Our servile off'rings? This must be our task
In heav'n, this our delight; how wearisome
Eternity so spent in worship paid
To whom we hate! Let us not then pursue
By force impossible, by leave obtain'd
Unacceptable, though in heav'n, our state
Of splendid vassalage; but rather seek
Our own good from ourselves, and from our own,
Live to ourselves, though in this vast recess,
Free, and to none accountable, preferring
Hard liberty before the easy yoke
Of servile pomp. Our greatness will appear
Then most conspicuous, when great things of small,
Useful of hurtful, prosp'rous of adverse
We can create, in what place soe'er
Thrive under evil, and work ease out of pain,
Through labour and endurance. This deep world
Of darkness do we dread? How oft amidst
Thick clouds and dark doth heav'n's all-ruling sire
Choose to reside, his glory unobscur'd,
And with the majesty of darkness round

Covers his throne; from whence deep thunders roar,
Must'ring their rage, and heav'n resembles hell?
As he our darkness, cannot we his light
Imitate when we please? This desert soil
Wants not her hidden lustre, gems and gold;
Nor want we skill or art, from whence to raise
Magnificence; and what can heav'n shew more?
Our torments also may in length of time
Become our elements; these piercing fires
As soft as now severe; our temper chang'd
Into their temper; which must needs remove
The sensible of pain. All things invite
To peaceful counsels, and the settled state
Of order, how in safety best we may
Compose our present evils, with regard
Of what we are and where, dismissing quite
All thoughts of war. Ye have what I advise.
He scarce had finish'd, when such murmur fill'd
Th' assembly, as when hollow rocks retain
The sound of blust'ring winds, which all night long
Had rous'd the sea, now with hoarse cadence lull
Sea-faring men o'erwatch'd, whose bark by chance
Or pinnace anchors in a craggy bay
After the tempest: such applause was heard
As Mammon ended, and his sentence pleas'd,
Advising peace: for such another field
They dreaded worse than hell: so much the fear
Of thunder and the sword of Michael
Wrought still within them: and no less desire
To found this nether empire, which might rise
By policy, and long process of time,
In emulation opposite to Heav'n.
Which, when Beelzebub perceiv'd, than whom,
Satan except, none higher sat, with grave
Aspect he rose, and in his rising seem'd
A pillar of state; deep on his front engraven
Deliberation sat, and public care;
And princely counsel in his face yet shone
Majestic, though in ruin: sage he stood,
With Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear
The weight of mightiest monarchies; his look
Drew audience and attention still as night

Or summer's noon-tide air, while thus he spake:
  Thrones and imperial power's, offspring of Heav'n,
Ethereal virtues; or these titles now
Must we renounce, and, changing style, be call'd
Princes of Hell? for so the popular vote
Inclines, here to continue, and build up here
A growing empire; doubtless, while we dream,
And know not that the King of Heav'n hath doom'd
This place our dungeon, not our safe retreat
Beyond his potent arm, to live exempt
From Heav'n's high jurisdiction, in new league
Banded against his throne, but to remain
In strictest bondage, tho' thus far remov'd
Under th' inevitable curb reserv'd
His captive multitude: for he, be sure,
In heighth or depth, still first and last will reign
Sole king, and of his kingdom lose no part
By our revolt, but over hell extend
His empire, and with iron sceptre rule
Us here, as with his golden those in heav'n.
What! sit we then projecting peace and war?
War hath determin'd us, and foil'd with loss
Irreparable; terms of peace yet none
Vouchsaf'd or sought: for what peace will be given
To us inslav'd, but custody severe,
And stripes, and arbitrary punishment
Inflicted? and what peace can we return
But to our power hostility and hate,
Untam'd reluctance, and revenge, though slow,
Yet ever plotting how the conqu'ror least
May reap his conquest, and may least rejoice
In doing what we most in suffering feel?
Nor will occasion want, nor shall we need,
With dangerous expedition, to invade
Heav'n, whose high walls fear no assault or siege,
Or ambush from the deep. What, if we find
Some easier enterprise? There is a place,
(If ancient and prophetic fame in heav'n
Err not) another world, the happy seat
Of some new race call'd MAN, about this time
To be created like to us, though less
In power and excellence, but favour'd more

Of him who rules above; so was his will
Pronounc'd among the gods, and, by an oath,
That shook heav'n's whole circumference, confirm'd.
Thither let us bend all our thoughts, to learn
What creatures there inhabit, of what mould
Or substance, how endued, and what their power,
And where their weakness, how attempted best,
By force or subtlety. Though Heav'n be shut,
And Heav'n's high Arbitrator sit secure
In his own strength, this place may lie expos'd,
The utmost border of his kingdom, left
To their defence who hold it: here perhaps
Some advantageous act may be achiev'd
By sudden onset, either with hell fire
To waste his whole creation, or possess
All as our own, and drive, as we were driven,
The puny habitants; or if not drive,
Seduce them to our party, that their God
May prove their foe, and with repenting hand
Abolish his own works. This would surpass
Common revenge, and interrupt his joy
In our confusion, and our joy upraise
In his disturbance; when his darling sons,
Hurl'd head-long to partake with us, shall curse
Their frail original, and faded bliss,
Faded so soon. Advise if this be worth
Attempting, or to sit in darkness here
Hatching vain empires. Thus Beelzebub
Pleaded his devilish counsel, first devis'd
By Satan, and in part propos'd: for whence,
But from the author of all ill, could spring
So deep a malice, to confound the race
Of mankind in one root, and earth with hell
To mingle and involve, done all to spite
The great Creator? but their spite still serves
His glory to augment. The bold design
Pleas'd highly those infernal States, and joy
Sparkled in all their eyes; with full assent
They vote: whereat his speech he thus renews:
  Well have ye judg'd, well ended long debate,
Synod of gods, and, like to what ye are,
Great things resolv'd, which from the lowest deep

Will once more lift us up, in spite of fate,
Nearer our ancient seat; perhaps in view
Of those bright confines, whence with neighb'ring arms
And opportune excursion, we may chance
Re-enter heav'n; or else in some mild zone
Dwell not unvisited of heav'n's fair light
Secure, and at the bright'ning orient beam
Purge off this gloom; the soft delicious air,
To heal the scar of these corrosive fires,
Shall breathe her balm. But first, whom shall we send
In search of this new world? whom shall we find
Sufficient? who shall tempt with wand'ring feet
The dark unbottom'd infinite abyss,
And through the palpable obscure find out
His uncouth way, or spread his airy flight,
Upborne with indefatigable wings,
Over the vast abrupt, e'er he arrive
The happy isle; what strength, what art can then
Suffice, or what evasion bear him safe
Through the strict senteries and stations thick
Of angels watching round? here he had need
All circumspection; and we now no less
Choice in our suffrage; for on whom we send,
The weight of all, and our last hope relies.
  This said, he sat; and expectation held
His look suspense, awaiting who appear'd
To second, or oppose, or undertake
The perilous attempt: but all sat mute,
Pond'ring the danger with deep thoughts; and each
In others count'nance read his own dismay,
Astonish'd: none among the choice and prime
Of those heav'n-warring champions, could be found
So hardy as to proffer or accept
Alone the dreadful voyage; till at last
Satan, whom now transcendent glory rais'd
Above his fellows, with monarchal pride
Conscious of highest worth, unmov'd thus spake:
  O progeny of heav'n! empyreal thrones!
With reason hath deep silence and demur
Seis'd us, though undismay'd: long is the way,
And hard, that out of hell leads up to light;
Our prison strong; this huge convex of fire,

Outrageous to devour, immures us round,
Ninefold, and gates of burning adamant
Barr'd over us, prohibit all egress.
These pass'd, if any pass, the void profound
Of unessential Night receives him next
Wide gaping, and with utter loss of being
Threatens him, plung'd in that abortive gulf.
If thence he 'scape, into whatever world,
Or unknown region, what remains him less
Than unknown dangers, and as hard escape?
But I should ill become this throne, O Peers!
And this imperial sov'reignty, adorn'd
With splendour, arm'd with power, if aught propos'd
And judg'd of public moment, in the shape
Of difficulty or danger could deter
Me from attempting. Wherefore do I assume
These royalties, and not refuse to reign,
Refusing to accept as great a share
Of hazard as of honour, due alike
To him who reigns, and so much to him due
Of hazard more, as he above the rest
High honour'd sits? Go, therefore, mighty powers,
Terror of Heav'n, tho' fall'n; intend at home,
While here shall be our home, what best may ease
The present misery, and render Hell
More tolerable; if there be cure or charm
To respite, or deceive, or slack the pain
Of this ill mansion: intermit no watch
Against a wakeful foe, while I abroad,
Through all the coasts of dark destruction, seek
Deliv'rance for us all; this enterprise
None shall partake with me. Thus saying, rose
The monarch, and prevented all reply;
Prudent, lest from his resolution rais'd,
Others among the chief might offer now
(Certain to be refus'd) what erst they fear'd;
And so refus'd, might in opinion stand
His rivals, winning cheap the high repute
Which he through hazard huge must earn. But they
Dreaded not more th' adventure than his voice
Forbidding; and at once with him they rose;
Their rising all at once was as the sound

Of thunder heard remote. Tow'rds him they bend
With awful rev'rence prone; and as a God
Extol him equal to th' Highest in Heav'n:
Nor fail'd they to express how much they prais'd,
That for the general safety he despis'd
His own: for neither do the spirits damn'd
Lose all their virtue; lest bad men should boast
Their specious deeds on earth, which glory excites,
Or close ambition varnish'd o'er with zeal.
Thus they their doubtful consultations dark
Ended, rejoicing in their matchless chief:
As when from mountain tops the dusky clouds
Ascending, while the north wind sleeps, o'erspread
Heav'n's cheerful face, the louring element
Scowls o'er the darken'd landskip snow, or shower;
If chance the radiant sun with farewel sweet
Extend his ev'ning beam, the fields revive,
The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings.
O shame to men, devil with devil damn'd
Firm concord holds, men only disagree
Of creatures rational, tho' under hope
Of heav'nly grace: and God proclaiming peace,
Yet live in hatred, enmity, and strife
Among themselves, and levy cruel wars,
Wasting the earth, each other to destroy:
As if (which might induce us to accord)
Man had not hellish foes enough besides,
That day and night for his destruction wait.
  The Stygian council thus dissolv'd; and forth
In order came the grand infernal peers:
Midst came their mighty paramount, and seem'd
Alone the antagonist of Heav'n, nor less
Than Hell's dread emperor with pomp supreme,
And godlike imitated state; him round
A globe of fiery seraphim inclos'd
With bright imblazonry, and horrent arms.
Then of their session ended they bid cry
With trumpets' regal sound the great result:
Tow'rds the four winds four speedy cherubim
Put to their mouths the sounding alchemy
By herald's voice explain'd; the hollow abyss

Heard far and wide, and all the host of hell
With deaf'ning shout return'd them loud acclaim.
Thence more at ease their minds, and somewhat rais'd
By false presumptuous hope, the ranged powers
Disband, and wand'ring, each his several way
Pursues, as inclination or sad choice
Leads him, perplex'd where he may likeliest find
Truce to his restless thoughts, and entertain
The irksome hours, till his great chief return.
Part on the plain, or in the air sublime,
Upon the wing, or in swift race contend,
As at th' Olympian games or Pythian fields.
Part curb their fiery steeds, or shun the goal
With rapid wheels, or fronted brigades form,
As when to warn proud cities war appears
Wag'd in the troubled sky, and armies rush
To battle in the clouds, before each van
Prick forth the airy knights, and couch their spears
Till thickest legions close; with feats of arms
From either end of Heav'n the welkin burns.
Others, with vast Typhœan rage more fell,
Rend up both rocks and hills, and ride the air
In whirlwind; Hell scarce holds the wild uproar.
As when Alcides, from Oechalia crown'd
With conquest, felt th' envenom'd robe, and tore
Through pain up by the roots Thessalian pines,
And Lichas from the top of Oeta threw
Into th' Euboic sea. Others more mild,
Retreated in a silent valley, sing
With notes angelical to many a harp,
Their own heroic deeds, and hapless fall
By doom of battle; and complain that Fate
Free virtue should inthrall to force or chance.
Their song was partial, but the harmony
(What could it less when sp'rits immortal sing?)
Suspended Hell, and took with ravishment
The thronging audience. In discourse more sweet
(For eloquence the soul, song charms the sense)
Others apart sat on a hill retired,
In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.

Of good and evil much they argu'd, then
Of happiness and final misery,
Passion and apathy, and glory and shame,
Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy:
Yet with a pleasing sorcery could charm
Pain for a while, or anguish, and excite
Fallacious hope, or arm th' obdur'd breast
With stubborn patience as with triple steel.
Another part, in squadrons and gross bands
On bold adventure to discover wide
That dismal world, if any clime perhaps
Might yield them easier habitation, bend
Four ways their flying march along the banks
Of four infernal rivers, that disgorge
Into the burning lake their baleful streams;
Abhorred Styx, the flood of deadly hate;
Sad Acheron, of sorrow, black and deep;
Cocytus, nam'd of lamentation loud,
Heard on the rueful stream; fierce Phlegethon,
Whose waves of torrent fire inflame with rage.
Far off from these a slow and silent stream,
Lethe, the river of oblivion, rolls
Her wat'ry labyrinth, whereof who drinks
Forthwith his former state and being forgets,
Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain.
Beyond this flood a frozen continent
Lies dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms
Of whirlwind and dire hail, which on firm land
Thaws not, but gathers heap, and ruin seems
Of ancient pile; or else deep snow and ice,
A gulf profound as that Serbonian bog
Betwixt Damiata and Mount Casius old,
Where armies whole have sunk: the parching air
Burns frore, and cold performs th' effect of fire.
Thither, by harpy-footed furies hal'd,
At certain revolutions, all the damn'd
Are brought, and feel by turns the bitter change
Of fierce extremes, by change more fierce,
From beds of raging fire to starve in ice
Their soft ethereal warmth, and there to pine
Immoveable, infix'd, and frozen round,
Periods of time, thence hurried back to fire.

They ferry over this Lethean sound
Both to and fro, their sorrow to augment,
And wish and struggle as they pass, to reach
The tempting stream, with one small drop to lose
In sweet forgetfulness all pain and woe,
All in one moment, and so near the brink;
But fate withstands, and to oppose th' attempt
Medusa with Gorgonian terror, guards
The ford, and of itself the water flies
All taste of living wight, as once it fled
The lip of Tantalus. Thus roving on
In confus'd march forlorn, th' advent'rous bands,
With shudd'ring horror pale, and eyes aghast,
View'd first their lamentable lot, and found
No rest: through many a dark and dreary vale
They pass'd, and many a region dolorous,
O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp,
Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death,
A universe of death, which God by curse
Created evil, for evil only good,
Where all life dies, death lives, and nature breeds,
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
Abominable, inutterable, and worse
Than fables yet have feign'd, or fear conceiv'd,
Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimeras dire.
  Meanwhile the adversary of God and man,
Satan, with thoughts inflam'd of high'st design,
Puts on swift wings, and towards the gates of hell
Explores his solitary flight; sometimes
He scours the right hand coast, sometimes the left;
Now shaves with level wing the deep, then soars
Up to the fiery concave tow'ring high.
As when far off at sea a fleet descry'd
Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial winds
Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles
Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring
Their spicy drugs: they on the trading flood
Through the wide Ethiopian to the Cape
Ply stemming nightly tow'rd the pole. So seem'd
Far off the flying Fiend: at last appear
Hell bounds high reaching to the horrid roof,
And thrice three-fold the gates; three folds were brass,

Three iron, three of adamantine rock,
Impenetrable, impal'd with circling fire,
Yet unconsum'd. Before the gates there sat
On either side a formidable shape;
The one seem'd woman to the waste, and fair,
But ended foul in many a scaly fold
Voluminous and vast, a serpent arm'd
With mortal sting: about her middle round
A cry of hell-hounds never ceasing bark'd
With wide Cerberean mouths full loud, and rung
A hideous peal; yet, when they list, would creep,
If aught disturb'd their noise, into her womb,
And kennel there, yet there still bark'd and howl'd
Within, unseen. Far less abhorr'd than these,
Vex'd Scylla bathing in the sea that parts
Calabria from the hoarse Trinacrian shore;
Nor uglier follow the night hag, when call'd
In secret, riding through the air she comes,
Lur'd with the smell of infant blood, to dance
With Lapland witches, while the lab'ring moon
Eclipses at their charms. The other shape,
If shape it might be call'd that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either; black it stood as Night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,
And shook a dreadful dart: what seem'd his head,
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.
Satan was now at hand, and from his seat
The monster moving, onward came as fast
With horrid strides: hell trembled as he strode.
Th' undaunted fiend what this might be admir'd;
Admir'd, not fear'd; God and his son except,
Created thing nought valued he or shunn'd;
And with disdainful look thus first began:
  Whence and what art thou, execrable shape,
That dar'st, though grim and terrible, advance
Thy miscreated front athwart my way
To yonder gates? through them I mean to pass,
That be assur'd, without leave ask'd of thee:
Retire, or taste thy folly, and learn by proof,
Hell-born, not to contend with sp'rits of heav'n.

To whom the goblin full of wrath reply'd :
Art thou that traitor angel, art thou he
Who first broke peace in heav'n and faith, till then
Unbroken, and in proud rebellious arms
Drew after him the third part of heav'n's sons
Conjur'd against the high'st, for which both thou
And they, outcast from God, are here condemn'd
To waste eternal days in woe and pain ?
And reckon'st thou thyself with sp'rits of heav'n,
Hell-doom'd, and breath'st defiance here, and scorn,
Where I reign king, and to enrage thee more,
Thy king and lord ? Back to thy punishment,
False fugitive, and to thy speed add wings,
Lest with a whip of scorpions I pursue
Thy ling'ring, or with one stroke of this dart
Strange horror seize thee, and pangs unfelt before.
So spake the grisly Terror, and in shape,
So speaking and so threat'ning, grew tenfold
More dreadful and deform : on th' other side,
Incens'd with indignation, Satan stood
Unterrify'd, and like a comet burn'd,
That fires the length of Opiuchus huge
In the Arctic sky, and from his horrid hair
Shakes pestilence and war. Each at the head
Levell'd his deadly aim ; their fatal hands
No second stroke intend, and such a frown
Each cast at th' other, as when two black clouds,
With heav'n's artillery fraught, come rattling on
Over the Caspian, then stand front to front
Hov'ring a space, till winds the signal blow
To join their dark encounter in mid air :
So frown'd the mighty combatants, that Hell
Grew darker at their frown; so match'd they stood ;
For never but once more was either like
To meet so great a foe : and now great deeds
Had been achiev'd, whereof all Hell had rung,
Had not the snaky sorceress that sat
Fast by Hell gate, and kept the fatal key,
Ris'n, and with hideous outcry rush'd between.
O father, what intends thy hand, she cry'd,
Against thy only son ? What fury, O son,
Possesses thee to bend that mortal dart

Against thy father's head? and know'st for whom?
For him who sits above and laughs the while
At thee ordain'd his drudge, to execute
What'er his wrath, which he calls Justice, bids;
His wrath, which one day will destroy ye both.
  She spake, and at her words the hellish pest
Forbore. Then these to her Satan return'd.
  So strange thy outcry, and thy words so strange
Thou interposest, that my sudden hand
Prevented spares to tell thee yet by deeds
What it intends; till first I know of thee,
What thing thou art, thus double-form'd, and why,
In this infernal vale first met, thou call'st
Me Father, and that phantasm call'st my Son;
I know thee not, nor ever saw till now
Sight more detestable than him and thee.
  T' whom thus the portress of hell gate reply'd:
Hast thou forgot me then, and do I seem
Now in thine eyes so foul? once deem'd so fair
In heav'n, when at th' assembly, and in sight
Of all the seraphim with thee combin'd
In bold conspiracy against Heav'n's King,
All on a sudden miserable pain
Surpris'd thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swum
In darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast
Threw forth, till on the left side opening wide,
Likest to thee in shape and count'nance bright,
Then shining heav'nly fair, a goddess arm'd
Out of thy head I sprung: amazement seis'd
All th' host of Heav'n; back they recoil'd afraid
At first and call'd me SIN, and for a sign
Portentous held me; but familiar grown,
I pleas'd, and with attractive graces won
The most averse, thee chiefly, who full oft
Thyself in me thy perfect image viewing,
Becam'st enamour'd, and such joy thou took'st
With me in secret, that my womb conceiv'd
A growing burden. Meanwhile war arose,
And fields were fought in Heav'n; wherein remain'd
(For what could else?) to our almighty Foe
Clear victory, to our part loss and rout
Through all the empyrean, down they fell,

Driv'n headlong from the pitch of Heav'n, down
Into this deep, and in the general fall
I also; at which time this powerful key
Into my hand was giv'n, with charge to keep
These gates for ever shut, which none can pass
Without my op'ning. Pensive here I sat
Alone, but long I sat not, till my womb,
Pregnant by thee, and now excessive grown,
Prodigious motion felt and rueful throes.
At last this odious offspring whom thou seest,
Thine own begotten, breaking violent way,
Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain
Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew
Transform'd: but he, my inbred enemy,
Forth issued, brandishing his fatal dart,
Made to destroy: I fled, and cry'd out Death;
Hell trembled at the hideous name, and sigh'd
From all her caves, and back resounded Death.
I fled, but he pursued (though more, it seems,
Inflam'd with lust than rage) and swifter far,
Me overtook, his mother, all dismay'd,
And in embraces forcible and foul
Ingendring with me, of that rape begot
These yelling monsters, that with ceaseless cry
Surround me, as thou saws't, hourly conceiv'd
And hourly born, with sorrow infinite
To me; for when they list, into the womb
That bred them, they return and howl, and gnaw
My bowels, their repast; then bursting forth
Afresh, with conscious terrors vex me round,
That rest or intermission none I find.
Before mine eyes in opposition sits
Grim Death, my son and foe, who sets them on,
And me his parent would full soon devour
For want of other prey, but that he knows
His end with mine involv'd; and knows that I
Should prove a bitter morsel, and his bane,
Whenever that shall be; so Fate pronounc'd.
But thou, O father, I forewarn thee, shun
His deadly arrow; neither vainly hope
To be invulnerable in those bright arms,
Though temper'd heav'nly, for that mortal dint.

Save he who reigns above, none can resist.
She finish'd; and the subtle Fiend his lore
Soon learn'd, now milder; and thus answer'd smooth:
Dear daughter, since thou claim'st me for thy sire
And my fair son here show'st me, the dear pledge
Of dalliance had with thee in Heav'n, and joys
Then sweet, now sad to mention, through dire change
Befall'n us unforeseen, unthought of; know,
I come no enemy, but to set free
From out this dark and dismal house of pain,
Both him and thee, and all the heav'nly host
Of spirits that in our just pretences arm'd,
Fell with us from on high: from them I go
This uncouth errand, sole, and one for all
Myself expose, with lonely steps to tread
Th' unfounded deep, and through the void immense
To search with wand'ring quest a place foretold
Should be, and, by concurring signs, e'er now
Created vast and round, a place of bliss
In the purlieus of Heaven, and therein plac'd
A race of upstart creatures, to supply
Perhaps our vacant room, though more remov'd,
Lest Heav'n, surcharg'd with potent multitude,
Might hap to move new broils: be this or aught
Than this more secret now design'd, I haste
To know, and this once known, shall soon return,
And bring ye to the place where thou and Death
Shall dwell at ease, and up and down unseen
Wing silently the buxom air, embalm'd
With odours; there ye shall be fed and fill'd
Immeasurably; all things shall be your prey.
He ceas'd; for both seem'd highly pleas'd, and Death
Grinn'd horrible a ghastly smile, to hear
His famine should be fill'd, and blest his maw
Destin'd to that good hour: no less rejoic'd
His mother bad, and thus bespake her sire:
The key of this infernal pit by due,
And by command of Heav'n's all-powerful King,
I keep, by him forbidden to unlock
These adamantine gates: against all force
Death ready stands to interpose his dart,
Fearless to be o'ermatch'd by living might.

But what owe I to his commands above,
Who hates me, and hath hither thrust me down
Into this gloom of Tartarus profound,
To sit in hateful office here confin'd,
Inhabitant of Heav'n, and heav'nly born,
Here in perpetual agony and pain,
With terrors and with clamours compass'd round
Of mine own brood, that on my bowels feed?
Thou art my father, thou my author; thou
My being gav'st me; whom should I obey
But thee, whom follow? thou wilt bring me soon
To that new world of light and bliss, among
The gods who live at ease, where I shall reign
At thy right hand voluptuous, as beseems
Thy daughter and thy darling, without end.
  Thus saying, from her side the fatal key,
Sad instrument of all our woe, she took;
And tow'rds the gate rolling her bestial train,
Forthwith the huge portcullis high up drew,
Which but herself, not all the Stygian powers
Could once have mov'd; then in the key-hole turns
Th' intricate wards, and every bolt and bar
Of massy ir'n or solid rock, with ease
Unfastens: on a sudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,
Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook
Of Erebus. She open'd, but to shut
Excell'd her pow'r; the gates wide open stood,
That with extended wings a banner'd host
Under spread ensigns marching might pass through,
With horse and chariots rank'd in loose array;
So wide they stood, and like a furnace mouth
Cast forth redounding smoke and ruddy flame.
Before their eyes in sudden view appear
The secrets of the hoary deep, a dark
Illimitable ocean without bound,
Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height,
And time, and place, are lost; where eldest Night
And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold
Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise
Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.

For hot, cold, moist, and dry, four champions fierce,
Strive here for mast'ry, and to battle bring
Their embryon atoms; they around the flag
Of each his faction, in their several clans,
Light-arm'd or heavy, sharp, smooth, swift or slow,
Swarm populous, unnumber'd as the sands
Of Barca or Cyrene's torrid soil,
Levied to side with warring winds, and poise
Their lighter wings. To whom these most adhere,
He rules a moment; Chaos umpire sits,
And by decision more embroils the fray
By which he reigns: next him high arbiter
Chance governs all. Into this wild abyss
The womb of Nature, and perhaps her grave,
Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,
But all these in their pregnant causes mix'd
Confus'dly, and which thus must ever fight,
Unless th' almighty Maker them ordain
His dark materials to create more worlds:
Into this wild abyss the wary Fiend
Stood on the brink of Hell, and look'd a while,
Pond'ring his voyage; for no narrow frith
He had to cross. Nor was his ear less peal'd
With noises loud and ruinous (to compare
Great things with small) than when Bellona storms,
With all her battering engines, bent to raze
Some capital city; or less than if this frame
Of Heav'n were falling, and these elements
In mutiny had from her axle torn
The stedfast Earth. At last his sail-broad vans
He spreads for flight, and in the surging smoke
Uplifted spurns the ground; thence many a league,
As in a cloudy chair, ascending rides
Audacious; but that seat soon failing, meets
A vast vacuity: all unawares,
Fluttering his pennons vain, plumb down he drops
Ten thousand fathom deep, and to this hour
Down had been falling, had not by ill chance
The strong rebuff of some tumultuous cloud,
Instinct with fire and nitre, hurried him
As many miles aloft: that fury stay'd,
Quench'd in a boggy syrtis, neither sea,

Nor good dry land: nigh founder'd, on he fares,
Treading the crude consistence, half on foot,
Half flying; behoves him now both oar and sail.
As when a gryphon through the wilderness
With winged course, o'er hill or moory dale,
Pursues the Arimaspian, who by stealth
Had from his wakeful custody purloin'd
The guarded gold: so eagerly the Fiend
O'er bog, or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,
With head, hands, wings, or feet, pursues his way,
And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies:
At length a universal hubbub wild
Of stunning sounds and voices all confus'd,
Borne through the hollow dark, assaults his ear
With loudest vehemence: thither he plies,
Undaunted, to meet there whatever power
Or spirit of the nethermost abyss
Might in that noise reside, of whom to ask
Which way the nearest coast of darkness lies
Bord'ring on light; when straight behold the throne
Of Chaos, and his dark pavilion spread
Wide on the wasteful deep; with him enthron'd
Sat sable-vested Night, eldest of things,
The consort of his reign; and by them stood
Orcus and Ades, and the dreadful name
Of Demogorgon; Rumour next, and Chance,
And Tumult and Confusion, all embroil'd,
And Discord, with a thousand various mouths.
T' whom Satan turning boldly, thus: Ye powers
And Spirits of this nethermost abyss,
Chaos and ancient Night, I come no spy,
With purpose to explore or to disturb
The secrets of your realm, but by constraint
Wand'ring this darksome desert, as my way
Lies through your spacious empire up to light,
Alone, and without guide, half lost, I seek
What readiest path leads where your gloomy bounds
Confine with Heav'n; or if some other place,
From your dominion won, th' ethereal King
Possesses lately, thither to arrive
I travel this profound; direct my course;
Directed no mean recompense it brings

To your behoof, if I that region lost,
All usurpation thence expell'd, reduce
To our original darkness and your sway,
(Which is my present journey) and once more
Erect the standard there of ancient Night;
Yours be th' advantage all, mine the revenge.
  Thus Satan; and him thus the Anarch old,
With fault'ring speech and visage incompos'd,
Answer'd. I know thee, Stranger, who thou art,
That mighty leading angel, who of late
Made head against Heaven's King, though overthrown.
I saw and heard, for such a numerous host
Fled not in silence through the frighted Deep
With ruin upon ruin, rout on rout,
Confusion worse confounded; and Heav'n gates
Pour'd out by millions her victorious bands
Pursuing. I upon my frontiers here
Keep residence; if all I can will serve
That little which is left so to defend,
Encroach'd on still through your intestine broils,
Weak'ning the sceptre of old Night; first Hell,
Your dungeon, stretching far and wide beneath;
Now lately Heav'n; and Earth, another world,
Hung o'er my realm, link'd in a golden chain
To that side Heav'n from whence your legions fell:
If that way be your walk, you have not far:
So much the nearer danger; go and speed;
Havoc, and spoil, and ruin, are my gain.
  He ceas'd; and Satan stay'd not to reply;
But glad that now his sea should find a shore,
With fresh alacrity and force renew'd,
Springs upward like a pyramid of fire
Into the wild expanse, and through the shock
Of fighting elements, on all sides round
Environ'd wins his way; harder beset
And more endanger'd, than when Argo pass'd
Through Bosphorus betwixt the justling rocks:
Or when Ulysses on the larboard shunn'd
Charybdis, and by th' other whirlpool steer'd.
So he with difficulty and labour hard
Mov'd on, with difficulty and labour he;
But he once past, soon after when man fell,

Strange alteration! Sin and Death amain
Following his track, such was the will of Heav'n,
Pav'd after him a broad and beaten way
Over the dark abyss, whose boiling gulf
Tamely endur'd a bridge of wondrous length,
From Hell continu'd reaching th' utmost orb
Of this frail world; by which the sp'rits perverse
With easy intercourse pass to and fro
To tempt or punish mortals, except whom
God and good angels guard by special grace.
  But now, at last, the sacred influence
Of light appears, and from the walls of Heav'n
Shoots far into the bosom of dim night
A glimmering dawn; here Nature first begins
Her farthest verge, and Chaos to retire;
As from her outmost works a broken foe
With tumult less and with less hostile din,
That Satan with less toil, and now with ease,
Wafts on the calmer wave by dubious light,
And like a weather-beaten vessel holds
Gladly the port, though shrouds and tackle torn;
Or in the emptier waste, resembling air,
Weighs his spread wings, at leisure to behold
Far off th' empyreal Heav'n extended wide
In circuit, undetermin'd square or round,
With opal tow'rs and battlements adorn'd
Of living sapphire, once his native seat;
And fast by hanging in a golden chain
This pendent world, in bigness as a star
Of smallest magnitude close by the moon.
Thither, full fraught with mischievous revenge,
Accurs'd, and in a cursed hour he hies.

BOOK III.

THE ARGUMENT.

God sitting on his throne, sees Satan flying towards this world, then newly created: shews him to the Son, who sat at his right hand; foretells the success of Satan in perverting Mankind; clears his own justice and wisdom from all imputation, having created Man free and able enough to have withstood his Tempter; yet declares his purpose of grace towards him, in regard he fell not of his own malice, as did Satan, but by him seduced. The son of God renders praises to his Father for the manifestation of his gracious purpose towards Man; but God again declares, that grace cannot be extended towards man without the satisfaction of divine Justice; Man hath offended the majesty of God by aspiring to Godhead, and therefore, with all his progeny devoted to death, must die, unless some one can be found sufficient to answer for his offence, and undergo his punishment. The Son of God freely offers himself a ransom for Man: The Father accepts him, ordains his incarnation, pronounces his exaltation above all names in heaven and earth; commands all the angels to adore him; they obey, and, hymning to their harps in full choir, celebrate the Father and the Son. Meanwhile Satan alights upon the bare convex of this world's outermost orb; where, wandering, he first finds a place since call'd the Limbo of Vanity; what persons and things fly up thither; thence comes to the gate of Heaven, describ'd ascending by stairs, and the waters above the firmament that flow about it: his passage thence to the orb of the sun! he finds there Uriel the regent of that orb, but first changes himself into the shape of a meaner angel; and pretending a zealous desire to behold the new creation, and Man whom God hath plac'd here, inquires of him the place of his habitation, and is directed; alights first on Mount Niphates.

HAIL holy Light, offspring of heav'n first born,
Or of th' Eternal coeternal beam,
May I express thee' unblam'd? Since God is light,
And never but in unapproached light
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
Or hear'st thou rather, pure ethereal stream,
Whose fountain who shall tell? before the sun,
Before the heav'ns thou wert, and at the voice
Of God, as with a mantle didst invest
The rising world of waters dark and deep,
Won from the void and formless infinite.
Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,
Escap'd the Stygian pool, though long detain'd
In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight
Through utter and through middle darkness borne,
With other notes than to th' Orphean lyre

I sung of Chaos and eternal Night,
Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down
The dark descent, and up to re-ascend,
Though hard and rare: thee I revisit safe,
And feel thy sov'reign vital lamp; but thou
Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain
To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;
So thick a drop serene hath quench'd their orbs,
Or dim suffusion veil'd. Yet not the more
Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt,
Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,
Smit with the love of sacred song; but chief
Thee, Sion, and the flow'ry brooks beneath,
That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,
Nightly I visit: nor sometimes forget
Those other two equall'd with me in fate,
So were I equall'd with them in renown,
Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides,
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old:
Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move
Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird
Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid
Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year
Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and for the book of Knowledge fair
Presented with a universal blank
Of nature's works to me expung'd and raz'd,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
So much the rather thou, celestial Light,
Shine inward, and the Mind through all her powers
Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight.
  Now had th' Almighty Father from above,
From the pure empyrean where he sits
High-thron'd above all height, bent down his eye,

His own works and their works at once to view:
About him all the sanctities of Heaven
Stood thick as stars, and from his sight receiv'd
Beatitude past utterance; on his right
The radiant image of his glory sat,
His only son; on earth he first beheld
Our two first Parents, yet the only two
Of mankind, in the happy garden plac'd,
Reaping immortal fruits of joy and love,
Uninterrupted joy, unrival'd love,
In blissful solitude; he then survey'd
Hell and the gulf between, and Satan there
Coasting the wall of Heav'n on this side Night
In the dun air sublime, and ready now
To stoop with wearied wings and willing feet
On the bare outside of this world, that seem'd
Firm land embosom'd, without firmament,
Uncertain which, in ocean or in air.
Him God beholding from his prospect high,
Wherein past, present, future, he beholds,
Thus to his only son foreseeing spake:
  Only begotten Son, seest thou what rage
Transports our adversary? whom no bounds
Prescrib'd, no bars of Hell, nor all the chains
Heap'd on him there, nor yet the main abyss
Wide interrupt can hold; so bent he seems
On desperate revenge, that shall redound
Upon his own rebellious head. And now
Through all restraint broke loose, he wings his way
Not far off Heav'n, in the precincts of light,
Directly towards the new created world,
And Man there plac'd, with purpose to assay
If him by force he can destroy, or worse,
By some false guile pervert; and shall pervert,
For Man will hearken to his glozing lies,
And easily transgress the sole command,
Sole pledge of his obedience: so will fall,
He and his faithless progeny: Whose fault?
Whose but his own? Ingrate, he had of me
All he could have; I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, tho' free to fall.

Such I created all th' ethereal powers
And sp'rits, both them who stood, and them who fail'd;
Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere
Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,
Where only what they needs must do appear'd,
Not what they would? what praise could they receive?
What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
When will and reason (reason also 's choice)
Useless and vain, of freedom both despoil'd,
Made passive both, had serv'd Necessity,
Not me? They, therefore, as to right belong'd,
So were created, nor can justly' accuse
Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,
As if predestination over-rul'd
Their will dispos'd by absolute decree
Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
Their own revolt, not I; if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown.
So without least impulse or shadow of fate,
Or aught by me immutably foreknown,
They trespass, authors to themselves in all
Both what they judge, and what they choose; for so
I form'd them free, and free they must remain
Till they inthrall themselves; I else must change
Their nature, and revoke the high decree
Unchangeable, eternal, which ordain'd
Their freedom; they themselves ordain'd their fall.
The first sort by their own suggestion fell,
Self-tempted, self-deprav'd: Man falls, deceiv'd
By th' other first: Man, therefore, shall find grace,
The other none: in mercy' and justice both,
Through Heav'n and earth, so shall my glory' excel,
But mercy first and last shall brightest shine.
  Thus, while God spake, ambrosial fragrance fill'd
All Heav'n, and in the blessed sp'rits elect
Sense of new joy ineffable diffus'd:
Beyond compare the Son of God was seen
Most glorious; in him all his father shone
Substantially express'd; and in his face
Divine compassion visibly appear'd,

Love without end, and without measure grace;
Which utt'ring, thus he to his father spake:
O Father! gracious was that word which clos'd
Thy sov'reign sentence, that Man should find grace;
For which both Heav'n and earth shall high extol
Thy praises, with th' innumerable sound
Of hymns and sacred songs, wherewith thy throne
Incompass'd shall resound thee ever blest.
For should Man finally be lost, should Man,
Thy creature late so lov'd, thy youngest son,
Fall circumvented thus by fraud, though join'd
With his own folly? that be from thee far,
That far be from thee, Father, who art judge
Of all things made, and judgest only right.
Or shall the Adversary thus obtain
His end, and frustrate thine? shall he fulfil
His malice, and thy goodness bring to nought,
Or proud return, though to his heavier doom,
Yet with revenge accomplish'd, and to Hell
Draw after him the whole race of mankind,
By him corrupted? or wilt thou thyself
Abolish thy creation, and unmake
For him, what for thy glory thou hast made?
So should thy goodness and thy greatness both
Be question'd and blasphem'd without defence.
To whom the great Creator thus reply'd.
O Son, in whom my soul hath chief delight,
Son of my bosom, Son who art alone
My word, my wisdom, and effectual might,
All hast thou spoken as my thoughts are, all
As my eternal purpose hath decreed:
Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will,
Yet not of will in him, but grace in me
Freely vouchsaf'd; once more I will renew
His lapsed powers, though forfeit and enthrall'd
By sin to foul exorbitant desires;
Upheld by me, yet once more he shall stand
On even ground against his mortal foe;
By me upheld, that he may know how frail
His fallen condition is, and to me owe
All his deliverance; and to none but me.

Some I have chosen of peculiar grace
Elect above the rest; so is my will:
The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warn'd
Their sinful state, and to appease betimes
Th' incensed Deity, while offer'd grace
Invites; for I will clear their senses dark,
What may suffice, and soften stony hearts
To pray, repent, and bring obedience due.
So pray'r, repentance, and obedience due,
Though but endeavour'd with sincere intent,
Mine ear shall not be slow, mine eye not shut.
And I will place within them as a guide
My umpire conscience, whom if they will hear,
Light after light well us'd they shall attain,
And to the end persisting, safe arrive.
This my long sufferance and my day of grace
They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste;
But hard be harden'd, blind be blinded more,
That they may stumble on and deeper fall;
And none but such from mercy I exclude.
But yet all is not done; Man disobeying,
Disloyal breaks his fealty, and sins
Against the high supremacy of Heaven,
Affecting God-head, and so losing all,
To expiate his treason hath nought left,
But to destruction sacred and devote,
He with his whole posterity must die,
Die he or justice must; unless for him
Some other able, and as willing, pay
The rigid satisfaction, death for death.
Say heav'nly Pow'rs, where shall we find such love?
Which of ye will be mortal to redeem
Man's mortal crime, and just th' unjust to save;
Dwells in all Heaven charity so dear?
He ask'd; but all the heav'nly choir stood mute,
And silence was in Heav'n: on Man's behalf
Patron or intercessor none appear'd,
Much less that durst upon his own head draw
The deadly forfeiture, and ransome set.
And now without redemption all mankind
Must have been lost, adjudg'd to Death and Hell
By doom severe, had not the Son of God,

In whom the fulness dwells of love divine,
His dearest mediation thus renew'd.
  Father, thy word is past, Man shall find grace;
And shall grace not find means, that finds her way
The speediest of thy winged messengers,
To visit all thy creatures, and to all
Comes unprevented, unimplor'd, unsought?
Happy for Man, so coming; he her aid
Can never seek, once dead in sins and lost;
Atonement for himself or offering meet,
Indebted and undone, hath none to bring:
Behold me then; me for him, life for life
I offer; on me let thine anger fall;
Account me Man; I for his sake will leave
Thy bosom, and this glory next to thee
Freely put off, and for him lastly die
Well pleas'd; on me let death wreak all his rage;
Under his gloomy pow'r I shall not long
Lie vanquish'd; thou hast given me to possess
Life in myself for ever; by thee I live,
Though now to Death I yield, and am his due,
All that of me can die; yet that debt paid,
Thou wilt not leave me in the loathsome grave
His prey, nor suffer my unspotted soul
For ever with corruption there to dwell;
But I shall rise victorious, and subdue
My vanquisher, spoil'd of his vaunted spoil;
Death his death's wound shall then receive and stoop
Inglorious, of his mortal sting disarm'd.
I through the ample air in triumph high
Shall lead Hell captive, maugre Hell, and shew
The pow'rs of darkness bound. Thou at the sight
Pleas'd, out of Heaven shalt look down and smile,
While by thee rais'd I ruin all my foes,
Death last, and with his carcase glut the grave;
Then with the multitude of my redeem'd
Shall enter Heav'n long absent, and return,
Father, to see thy face, wherein no cloud
Of anger shall remain, but peace assur'd
And reconcilement; wrath shall be no more
Thenceforth, but in thy presence joy entire.

His words here ended, but his meek aspect
Silent yet spake, and breath'd immortal love
To mortal men, above which only shone
Filial obedience: as a sacrifice
Glad to be offer'd, he attends the will
Of his great Father. Admiration seiz'd
All Heav'n, what this might mean, and whither tend,
Wond'ring; but soon the Almighty thus reply'd.
O thou in Heav'n and Earth, the only peace
Found out for mankind under wrath, O thou
My sole complacence! well thou know'st how dear
To me are all my works, nor Man the least,
Though last created; that for him I spare
Thee from my bosom and right hand, to save,
By losing thee a while, the whole race lost.
Thou therefore, whom thou only canst redeem,
Their nature also to thy nature join;
And be thyself Man among men on earth,
Made flesh, when time shall be, of virgin seed,
By wond'rous birth: be thou in Adam's room
The head of all mankind, though Adam's son.
As in him perish all men, so in thee,
As from a second root, shall be restor'd
As many as are restor'd, without thee none.
His crime makes guilty all his sons; thy merit
Imputed shall absolve them who renounce
Their own both righteous and unrighteous deeds,
And live in thee transplanted, and from thee
Receive new life. So man, as is most just,
Shall satisfy for Man, be judg'd and die,
And dying rise, and rising with him raise,
His brethren, ransom'd with his own dear life.
So heav'nly love shall outdo hellish hate,
Giving to death, and dying to redeem,
So dearly to redeem, what hellish hate
So easily destroy'd, and still destroys
In those who, when they may, accept not grace.
Nor shalt thou, by descending to assume
Man's nature, lessen or degrade thine own.
Because thou hast, though thron'd in highest bliss
Equal to God, and equally enjoying

God-like fruition, quitted all to save
A world from utter loss, and hast been found
By merit more than birthright, Son of God,
Found worthiest to be so by being good,
Far more than great or high; because in thee
Love hath abounded more than glory abounds,
Therefore thy humiliation shall exalt
With thee thy manhood also to this throne;
Here shalt thou sit incarnate, here shalt reign
Both God and Man, Son both of God and Man,
Anointed universal king; all power
I give thee; reign for ever, and assume
Thy merits; under thee as head supreme
Thrones, Princedoms, Pow'rs, Dominions I reduce;
All knees to thee shall bow, of them that bide
In Heav'n, or Earth, or under Earth in Hell:
When thou attended gloriously from Heaven
Shalt in the sky appear, and from thee send
The summoning Arch-angels to proclaim
Thy dread tribunal; forthwith from all winds
The living, and forthwith the cited dead
Of all past ages, to the general doom
Shall hasten, such a peal shall rouse their sleep.
Then all thy saints assembled, thou shalt judge
Bad men and angels; they arraign'd shall sink
Beneath thy sentence; Hell, her numbers full,
Thenceforth shall be for ever shut. Meanwhile
The world shall burn, and from her ashes spring
New Heav'n and Earth, wherein the just shall dwell,
And after all their tribulations long
See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds,
With joy and love triumphing and fair truth.
Then thou thy regal sceptre shalt lay by,
For regal sceptre then no more shall need;
God shall be all in all. But all ye Gods,
Adore him, who to compass all this dies;
Adore the Son, and honour him as me.
No sooner had the Almighty ceas'd, but all
The multitude of angels, with a shout
Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices, uttering joy, Heav'n rung

With jubilee, and loud Hosannas fill'd
Th' eternal regions: lowly reverend
Towards either throne they bow, and to the ground
With solemn adoration down they cast
Their crowns inwove with amarant and gold;
Immortal amarant, a flow'r which once
In Paradise, fast by the tree of life,
Began to bloom; but soon for man's offence
To Heav'n remov'd, where first it grew, there grows,
And flow'rs aloft, shading the fount of life,
And where the river of bliss through midst of Heaven
Rolls o'er Elysian flow'rs her amber stream:
With these that never fade the Spirits elect
Bind their resplendent locks inwreath'd with beams,
Now in loose garlands thick thrown off, the bright
Pavement, that like a sea of jasper shone,
Empurpled with celestial roses smil'd.
Then crown'd again, their golden harps they took,
Harps ever tun'd, that glittering by their side
Like quivers hung, and with preamble sweet
Of charming symphony, they introduce
Their sacred song, and waken raptures high;
No voice exempt, no voice but well could join
Melodious part, such concord is in Heaven.
  Thee, Father, first they sung, Omnipotent,
Immutable, Immortal, Infinite,
Eternal King; thee Author of all being,
Fountain of light, thyself invisible
Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sitt'st
Thron'd inaccessible, but when thou shad'st
The full blaze of thy beams, and through a cloud
Drawn round about thee like a radiant shrine,
Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,
Yet dazzle Heav'n, that brightest Seraphim
Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes.
Thee next they sang, of all creation first,
Begotten Son, Divine Similitude,
In whose conspicuous count'nance, without cloud
Made visible, th' Almighty Father shines,
Whom else no creature can behold; on thee
Impress'd th' effulgence of his glory' abides,

Transfus'd on thee his ample Spirit rests.
He Heav'n of Heav'ns, and all the Pow'rs therein
By thee created, and by thee threw down
Th' aspiring Dominations; thou that day
Thy Father's dreadful thunder didst not spare,
Nor stop thy flaming chariot wheels that shook
Heav'n's everlasting frame, while o'er the necks
Thou drov'st of warring Angels disarray'd.
Back from pursuit thy Pow'rs with loud acclaim
Thee only extoll'd, Son of thy Father's might,
To execute fierce vengeance on his foes,
Not so on Man: Him, through their malice fall'n,
Father of mercy and grace, thou didst not doom
So strictly, but much more to pity incline:
No sooner did thy dear and only Son
Perceive thee purpos'd not to doom frail Man
So strictly, but much more to pity inclin'd,
He to appease thy wrath, and end the strife
Of mercy and justice in thy face discern'd,
Regardless of the bliss wherein he sat
Second to thee, offer'd himself to die
For Man's offence. O unexampled love,
Love no where to be found less than divine!
Hail Son of God, Saviour of Men! thy name
Shall be the copious matter of my song
Henceforth; and never shall my harp thy praise
Forget, nor from thy Father's praise disjoin.
  Thus they in Heav'n, above the starry sphere,
Their happy hours in joy and hymning spent.
Meanwhile, upon the firm opacous globe
Of this round world, whose first convex divides
The luminous inferior orbs inclos'd
From Chaos and th' inroad of darkness old,
Satan alighted walks: a globe far off
It seem'd, now seems a boundless continent
Dark, waste, and wild, under the frown of Night
Starless expos'd, and ever-threat'ning storms
Of Chaos blust'ring round, inclement sky;
Save on that side which from the wall of Heaven,
Tho' distant far, some small reflection gains
Of glimmering air, less vex'd with tempest loud:
Here walk'd the Fiend at large in spacious field.

As when a vulture, on Imæus bred,
Whose snowy ridge the roving Tartar bounds,
Dislodging from a region scarce of prey,
To gorge the flesh of lambs or weanling kids
On hills where flocks are fed, flies tow'rds the springs
Of Ganges or Hydaspes, Indian streams;
But in his way lights on the barren plains
Of Sericana, where Chineses drive
With sails and wind their cany waggons light:
So on this windy sea of land, the Fiend
Walk'd up and down alone, bent on his prey;
Alone, for other creature in this place
Living or lifeless to be found was none;
None yet, but store hereafter from the earth
Up hither like aerial vapours flew
Of things transitory' and vain, when sin
With vanity had fill'd the works of men;
Both all things vain, and all who in vain things
Built their fond hopes of glory, or lasting fame,
Or happiness in this or th' other life;
All who have their reward on earth, the fruits
Of painful superstition and blind zeal,
Nought seeking but the praise of men, here find
Fit retribution, empty as their deeds;
All th' unaccomplish'd works of Nature's hand,
Abortive, monstrous, or unkindly mix'd,
Dissolv'd on earth, fleet hither, and in vain,
Till final dissolution, wander here,
Not in the neighbouring moon, as some have dream'd;
Those argent fields more likely habitants,
Translated Saints, or middle Spirits hold
Betwixt th' angelical and human kind.
Hither of ill-join'd sons and daughters born
First from the ancient world those giants came
With many a vain exploit, tho' then renown'd:
The builders next of Babel on the plain
Of Sennaar, and still with vain design
New Babels, had they wherewithal, would build:
Others came single; he who, to be deem'd
A god, leapt fondly into Ætna flames,
Empedocles; and he who to enjoy
Plato's Elysium, leapt into the sea,

Cleombrotus; and many more too long,
Embryos and idiots, eremites and friars
White, black, and grey, with all their trumpery.
Here pilgrims roam, that stray'd so far to seek
In Golgotha him dead, who lives in Heaven;
And they who, to be sure of Paradise,
Dying put on the weeds of Dominic,
Or in Franciscan think to pass disguis'd;
They pass the planets sev'n, and pass the fix'd,
And that chrystalline sphere whose balance weighs
The trepidation talk'd, and that first mov'd;
And now Saint Peter at Heav'n's wicket seems
To wait them with his keys, and now at foot
Of Heav'n's ascent they lift their feet, when lo
A violent cross wind from either coast
Blows them transverse ten thousand leagues away
Into the devious air; then might ye see
Cowls, hoods, and habits, with their wearers tost,
And flutter'd into rags; then reliques, beads,
Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls,
The sport of winds: all these upwhirl'd aloft
Fly o'er the backside of the world far off
Into a Limbo large and broad, since call'd
The Paradise of Fools, to few unknown
Long after, now unpeopled and untrod.
All this dark globe the Fiend found as he pass'd,
And long he wander'd, till at last a gleam
Of dawning light turn'd thitherward in haste
His travel'd steps: far distant he descries
Ascending by degrees magnificent
Up to the wall of Heav'n a structure high;
At top whereof, but far more rich, appear'd
The work as of a kingly palace gate,
With frontispiece of diamond and gold
Embellish'd; thick with sparkling orient gems
The portal shone, inimitable on earth
By model, or by shading pencil drawn.
The stairs were such as whereon Jacob saw
Angels ascending and descending, bands
Of guardians bright when he from Esau fled
To Padan Aram, in the field of Luz
Dreaming by night under the open sky,

And waking cry'd, This is the gate of Heaven.
Each stair mysteriously was meant, nor stood
There always, but drawn up to heav'n sometimes
Viewless, and underneath a bright sea flow'd
Of jasper, or of liquid pearl, whereon
Who after came from earth, sailing arriv'd,
Wafted by angels, or flew o'er the lake
Rapt in a chariot drawn by fiery steeds.
The stairs were then let down, whether to dare
The Fiend by easy' ascent, or aggravate
His sad exclusion from the doors of bliss:
Direct against which open'd from beneath,
Just o'er the blissful seat of Paradise,
A passage down to th' Earth, a passage wide,
Wider by far than that of after times
Over mount Sion, and, tho' that were large,
Over the Promis'd Land, to God so dear,
By which, to visit oft those happy tribes,
On high behests his angels to and fro
Pass'd frequent, and his eye with choice regard
From Paneos, the fount of Jordan's flood
To Beërsaba, where the Holy Land
Borders on Egypt and th' Arabian shore;
So wide the opening seem'd, where bounds were set
To darkness such as bound the ocean wave.
Satan from hence, now on the lower stair
That scal'd by steps of gold to Heaven gate,
Looks down with wonder at the sudden view
Of all this world at once. As when a scout
Through dark and desert ways with peril gone
All night, at last by break of cheerful dawn
Obtains the brow of some high-climbing hill,
Which to his eye discovers unaware
The goodly prospect of some foreign land
First seen, or some renown'd metropolis
With glist'ring spires and pinnacles adorn'd,
Which now the rising sun gilds with his beams:
Such wonder seiz'd, tho' after Heaven seen,
The Sp'rit malign, but much more envy seiz'd,
At sight of all this world beheld so fair.
Round he surveys (and well might, where he stood
So high above the circling canopy

Of night's extended shade) from eastern point
Of Libra to the fleecy star that bears
Andromeda far off Atlantic seas
Beyond th' horizon; then from pole to pole
He views in breadth, and without longer pause
Downright into the world's first region throws
His flight precipitant, and winds with ease
Through the pure marble air his oblique way
Amongst innumerable stars, that shone
Stars distant, but nigh hand seem'd other worlds:
Or other worlds they seem'd, or happy isles,
Like those Hesperian gardens fam'd of old,
Fortunate fields, and groves, and flow'ry vales,
Thrice happy isles! but who dwelt happy there
He stay'd not to inquire: above them all
The golden sun in splendor likest Heaven
Allur'd his eye: thither his course he bends
Through the calm firmament, (but up or down,
By centre, or eccentric, hard to tell,
Or longitude,) where the great luminary
Aloof the vulgar constellations thick,
That from his lordly eye keep distance due,
Dispenses light from far; they, as they move
Their starry dance in numbers that compute
Days, months, and years, tow'rds his all-cheering lamp
Turn swift their various motions, or are turn'd
By his magnetic beam, that gently warms
The universe, and to each inward part
With gentle penetration, though unseen,
Shoots invisible virtue ev'n to the deep;
So wondrously was set his station bright.
There lands the Fiend, a spot like which perhaps
Astronomer in the sun's lucent orb
Through his glaz'd optic tube yet never saw.
The place he found beyond expression bright,
Compar'd with aught on earth, metal or stone,
Not all parts like, but all alike inform'd
With radiant light, as glowing ir'n with fire;
If metal, part seem'd gold, part silver clear;
If stone, carbuncle most or crysolite,
Ruby or topaz, or the twelve that shone
In Aaron's breast-plate, and a stone besides

Imagin'd rather oft than elsewhere seen,
That stone, or like to that, which here below
Philosophers in vain so long have sought,
In vain, though by their powerful art they bind
Volatile Hermes, and call up unbound,
In various shapes, old Proteus from the sea,
Drain'd through a limbec to his naked form.
What wonder then if fields, and regions, here
Breathe forth elixir pure, and rivers run
Potable gold, when with one virtuous touch
Th' arch-chimic sun, so far from us remote,
Produces with terrestrial humour mix'd,
Here in the dark so many precious things
Of colour glorious, and effect so rare?
Here matter new to gaze the devil met
Undazzled: far and wide his eye commands,
For sight no obstacle found here, or shade,
But all sun-shine; as when his beams at noon
Culminate from th' Æquator; as they now
Shot upward still direct; whence no way round
Shadow from body opaque can fall, and th' air
(No where so clear) sharpen'd his visual ray
To objects distant far, whereby he soon
Saw within ken a glorious angel stand,
The same whom John saw also in the sun:
His back was turn'd, but not his brightness hid:
Of beaming sunny rays a golden tiar
Circl'd his head, nor less his locks behind
Illustrious on his shoulders, fledge with wings,
Lay waving round: on some great charge employ'd
He seem'd, or fixt in cogitation deep.
Glad was the spirit impure, as now in hope
To find who might direct his wand'ring flight
To paradise, the happy seat of man,
His journey's end, and our beginning woe.
But first he casts to change his proper shape,
Which else might work him danger, or delay:
And now a stripling Cherub he appears,
Not of the prime, yet such as in his face
Youth smil'd celestial, and to every limb
Suitable grace diffus'd, so well he feign'd.
Under a coronet his flowing hair

In curls on either cheek play'd; wings he wore
Of many a colour'd plume, sprinkl'd with gold:
His habit fit for speed succinct, and held
Before his decent steps a silver wand.
He drew not nigh unheard, the angel bright,
Ere he drew nigh, his radiant visage turn'd,
Admonish'd by his ear; and strait was known
Th' arch-angel Uriel, one of the sev'n
Who in God's presence nearest to his throne,
Stand ready at command, and are his eyes
That run through all the heav'ns, or down to the earth
Bear his swift errands, over moist and dry,
O'er sea and land: him Satan thus accosts:
  Uriel! for thou of those sev'n spirits that stand
In sight of God's high throne, gloriously bright,
The first art wont His great authentic will
Interpreter through highest heaven to bring,
Where all his sons thy embassy attend:
And here ar't likeliest by supreme decree
Like honour to obtain; and as his eye,
To visit oft this new creation round;
Unspeakable desire to see, and know
All these his wondrous works, but chiefly Man,
His chief delight and favour; him, for whom
All these his works so wondrous he ordain'd,
Hath brought me from the choirs of Cherubim
Alone thus wand'ring: brightest Seraph! tell,
In which of all these shining orbs hath man
His fixed seat, or fixed seat hath none,
But all these shining orbs his choice to dwell;
That I may find him, and with secret gaze,
Or open admiration, him behold
On whom the great Creator hath bestow'd
Worlds, and on whom hath all these graces pour'd;
That both in him, and all things, as is meet,
The universal maker we may praise;
Who justly hath driven out his rebel foes
To deepest Hell; and, to repair their loss,
Created this new happy race of men,
To serve him better: wise are all his ways!
  So spake the false dissembler unperceiv'd;
For neither Man nor Angel can discern

Hypocrisy, (the only evil that walks
Invisible, except to God alone,
By his permissive will, through heaven and earth:
And oft though wisdom wake, suspicion sleeps
At wisdom's gate, and to simplicity
Resigns her charge, while goodness thinks no ill
Where no ill seems) which now for once beguil'd
Uriel, though regent of the sun, and held
The sharpest sighted spirit of all in heav'n:
Who to the fraudulent impostor foul,
In his uprightness answer thus return'd.
  Fair Angel! thy desire which tends to know
The works of God, thereby to glorify
The great work-master, leads to no excess
That reaches blame, but rather merits praise
The more it seems excess, that led thee hither
From thy impyreal mansion thus alone,
To witness with thine eyes what some perhaps,
Contented with report, hear only in Heav'n:
For wonderful indeed are all His works!
Pleasant to know, and worthiest to be all
Had in remembrance always with delight.
But, what created mind can comprehend
Their number, or the wisdom infinite
That brought them forth, but hid their causes deep?
I saw when at His word the formless mass,
This world's material mould, came to a heap;
Confusion heard His voice, and wild uproar
Stood rul'd, stood vast infinitude confin'd:
Till at His second bidding darkness fled,
Light shone, and order from disorder sprung.
Swift to their several quarters hasted then
The cumbrous elements, earth, flood, air, fire,
And the ethereal quintessence of Heav'n
Flew upward, spirited with various forms,
That roll'd orbicular, and turn'd to stars,
Numberless, as thou seest, and how they move;
Each had his place appointed, each his course;
The rest in circuit walls this universe.
Look downward on that globe whose hither side
With light from hence, tho' but reflected, shines:
That place is earth, the seat of Man; that light

His day, which else, as th' other hemisphere,
Night would invade; but there the neighbouring moon
(So call that opposite fair star) her aid
Timely interposes, and her monthly round
Still ending, still renewing through mid heav'n,
With borrow'd light her countenance triform
Hence fills, and empties, to enlighten th' earth,
And in her pale dominion checks th' night.
That spot to which I point is Paradise,
Adam's abode, those lofty shades his bow'r;
Thy way thou can'st not miss, me mine requires.
Thus said, he turn'd; and Satan bowing low
(As to superior spirits is wont in heav'n,
Where honour due, and reverence none neglects)
Took leave, and tow'rd the coast of earth beneath,
Down from th' ecliptic, sped with hop'd success,
Throws his steep flight in many an airy wheel;
Nor staid, till on Niphates' top he lights.

BOOK IV.

THE ARGUMENT.

Satan, now in prospect of Eden, and nigh the place where he must now attempt the bold enterprise which he undertook alone against God and Man, falls into many doubts with himself, and many passions, fear, envy, and despair: but at length confirms himself in evil, journeys on to Paradise, whose outward prospect and situation is described, overleaps the bounds, sits in the shape of a cormorant on the tree of Life, as the highest in the garden, to look about him. The garden described; Satan's first sight of Adam and Eve; his wonder at their excellent form and happy state, but with resolution to work their fall; overhears their discourse; thence gathers that the tree of Knowledge was forbidden them to eat of, under penalty of death; and thereon intends to found his temptation, by seducing them to transgress: then leaves them awhile to know farther of their state by some other means. Meanwhile Uriel descending on a sun-beam warns Gabriel (who had in charge the gate of Paradise) that some evil spirit had escaped the Deep, and past at noon by his sphere in the shape of a good Angel down to Paradise, discovered afterwards by his furious geſtures in the mount: Gabriel promises to find him out e'er morning. Night coming on, Adam and Eve discourse of going to theit rest: their bower described; their evening worship. Gabriel drawing forth his bands of night watch to walk the round of Paradise, appoints two strong Angels to Adam's bower, lest the evil spirit should be there doing some harm to Adam or Eve sleeping; there they find him at the ear of Eve, tempting her in a dream, and bring him, though unwilling, to Gabriel; by whom question'd, he scornfully answers, prepares resistance, but, hinder'd by a sign from heav'n, flies out of Paradise.

O FOR that warning voice, which he who saw
Th' Apocalyps heard cry in Heav'n aloud,
That when the Dragon, put to second rout,
Came furious down to be reveng'd on men
Wo to th' inhabitants on earth! that now,
While time was, our first parents had been warn'd
The coming of their secret foe, and 'scap'd,
Happily, so 'scap'd his mortal snare: for now
Satan, now first inflam'd with rage, came down
The tempter e'er th' accuser of mankind,
To wreak on innocent frail man his loss
Of that first battle, and his flight to Hell:
Yet not rejoicing in his speed, tho' bold,
Far off and fearless, nor with cause to boast,
Begins his dire attempt, which nigh the birth
Now rolling boils in his tumultuous breast,
And like a devilish engine back recoils
Upon himself; horror and doubt distract
His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir
The Hell within him; for within him Hell
He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell
One step no more than from himself can fly
By change of place: now conscience wakes despair
That slumber'd, wakes the bitter memory
Of what he was, what is, and what must be,
Worse; of worse deeds, whose sufferings must ensue.
Sometimes tow'rds Eden, which now in his view
Lay pleasant, his griev'd look he fixes sad;
Sometime tow'rds Heaven and the full-blazing sun,
Which now sat high in his meridian tower:
Then much revolving, thus in sighs began:
O thou that, with surpassing glory crown'd,

Look'st from thy sole dominion like the God
Of this new world; at whose sight all the stars
Hide their diminish'd heads; to thee I call,
But with no friendly voice, and add thy name,
O Sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams,
That bring to my remembrance from what state
I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere!
Till pride and worse ambition threw me down,
Warring in Heav'n against Heav'n matchless King;
Ah wherefore! he deserv'd no such return
From me, whom he created what I was
In that bright eminence, and with his good
Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.
What could be less than to afford him praise,
The easiest recompence, and pay him thanks:
How due! yet all his good prov'd ill in me,
And wrought but malice; lifted up so high
I'sdein'd subjection, and thought one step higher
Would set me high'st, and in a moment quit
The debt immense of endless gratitude,
So burdensome still paying, still to owe;
Forgetful what from him I still receiv'd,
And understood not that a grateful mind
By owing owes not, but still pays, at once
Indebted and discharg'd; what burden then?
O had his pow'rful destiny ordain'd
Me some inferior Angel, I had stood
Then happy; no unbounded hope had rais'd
Ambition. Yet, why not? some other Power
As great might have aspir'd, and me, tho' mean,
Drawn to his part; but other Pow'rs as great
Fell not, but stand unshaken, from within
Or from without, to all temptations arm'd.
Hadst thou the same free will and pow'r to stand?
Thou hadst; whom hast thou then, or what, t' accuse,
But Heav'n's free love dealt equally to all?
Be then his love accurs'd, since love or hate,
To me alike, it deals eternal woe.
Nay curs'd be thou; since against his thy will
Chose freely what it now so justly rues.
Me miserable! which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?

Which way I fly is hell; myself am Hell;
And in the lowest deep a lower deep
Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heaven.
O then at last relent: is there no place
Left for repentance, none for pardon left?
None left but by submission; and that word
Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame
Among the Sp'rits beneath, whom I seduc'd
With other promises and other vaunts
Than to submit, boasting I could subdue
Th' Omnipotent. Ah me, they little know
How dearly I abide that boast so vain,
Under what torments inwardly I groan,
While they adore me on the throne of Hell.
With diadem and sceptre high advanc'd,
The lower still I fall, only supreme
In misery; such joy ambition finds.
But say I could repent, and could obtain
By act of grace my former state; how soon
Would height recall high thoughts, how soon unsay
What feign'd submission swore? ease would recant
Vows made in pain, as violent and void.
For never can true reconcilement grow,
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierc'd so deep;
Which would but lead us to a worse relapse
And heavier fall: so should I purchase dear
Short intermission bought with double smart.
This knows my punisher; therefore as far
From granting he, as I from begging peace:
All hope excluded thus, behold instead
Of us out-cast, exil'd, his new delight,
Mankind created, and for him this world.
So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,
Farewell remorse; all good to me is lost;
Evil be thou my good; by thee at least
Divided empire with Heav'n's king I hold,
By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign;
As Man e'er long, and this new world, shall know.
  Thus while he spake, each passion dimm'd his face,
Thrice chang'd with pale ire, envy, and despair;
Which marr'd his borrow'd visage, and betray'd

Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld.
For heav'nly minds from such distempers foul
Are ever clear. Whereof he soon aware,
Each perturbation smooth'd with outward calm,
Artificer of fraud, and was the first
That practis'd falsehood under saintly shew,
Deep malice to conceal, couch'd with revenge:
Yet not enough had practis'd to deceive
Uriel once warn'd; whose eye pursued him down
The way he went, and on th' Assyrian mount
Saw him disfigur'd, more than could befal
Spirit of happy sort: his gestures fierce
He mark'd, and mad demeanour, then alone,
As he suppos'd, all unobserv'd, unseen.
So on he fares, and to the border comes
Of Eden, where delicious Paradise,
Now nearer, crowns with her inclosure green,
As with a rural mound, the champain head
Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides
With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild,
Access deny'd; and over head up grew
Insuperable height of loftiest shade,
Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm,
A sylvan scene; and as the ranks ascend
Shade above shade, a woody theatre
Of stateliest view. Yet higher than their tops
The verd'rous wall of Paradise up-sprung:
Which to our general sire gave prospect large
Into his nether empire neighb'ring round.
And higher than that wall a circling row
Of goodliest trees, loaden with fairest fruit,
Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue,
Appear'd, with gay enamel'd colours mix'd:
On which the sun more glad impress'd his beams
Than in fair evening cloud, or humid bow,
When God hath show'r'd the earth; so lovely seem'd
That landskip: and of pure, now purer air
Meets his approach, and to the heart inspires
Vernal delight and joy, able to drive
All sadness but despair: now gentle gales,
Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole

Those balmy spoils. As when to them who sail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
Mozambic, off at sea north-east winds blow
Sabean odour from the spicy shore
Of Araby the blest; with such delay
Well pleas'd they slack their course, and many a league,
Cheer'd with the grateful smell, old Ocean smiles:
So entertain'd those odorous sweets the Fiend,
Who came their bane, though with them better pleas'd
Than Asmodeus with the fishy fume
That drove him, tho' enamour'd, from the spouse
Of Tobit's son, and with a vengeance sent
From Media post to Egypt, there fast bound.
  Now to th' ascent of that steep savage hill
Satan had journey'd on, pensive and slow;
But further way found none, so thick intwin'd,
As one continued brake, the undergrowth
Of shrubs and tangling bushes had perplex'd
All path of man or beast that pass'd that way:
One gate there only was, and that look'd east,
On th' other side: which, when th' arch-felon saw,
Due entrance he disdain'd, and in contempt,
At one slight bound high over-leap'd all bound
Of hill or highest wall, and sheer within
Lights on his feet. As when a prowling wolf,
Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,
Watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve
In hurdled cotes amid the fields secure,
Leaps o'er the fence with ease into the fold:
Or as a thief, bent to unhoard the cash
Of some rich burgher, whose substantial doors,
Cross-barr'd and bolted fast, fear no assault,
In at the window climbs, or o'er the tiles:
So clomb this first grand thief into God's fold;
So since into his church lewd hirelings climb.
Thence up he flew, and on the tree of life,
The middle tree, and highest there that grew,
Sat like a cormorant; yet not true life
Thereby regain'd, but sat devising death
To them who liv'd; nor on the virtue thought
Of that life-giving plant, but only us'd
For prospect, what, well us'd, had been the pledge

Of immortality. So little knows
Any, but God alone, to value right
The good before him, but perverts best things
To worst abuse, or to their meanest use.
Beneath him with new wonder now he views,
To all delight of human sense expos'd
In narrow room, Nature's whole wealth, yea more,
A Heav'n on Earth: for blissful Paradise
Of God the garden was, by him in th' east
Of Eden planted; Eden stretch'd her line
From Auran eastward to the royal towers
Of great Seleucia, built by Grecian kings,
Or where the sons of Eden long before
Dwelt in Telassar: in this pleasant soil
His far more pleasant garden God ordain'd;
Out of the fertile ground he caus'd to grow
All trees of noblest kind, for sight, smell, taste;
And all amid them stood the tree of life,
High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit
Of vegetable gold; and next to life,
Our death, the tree of knowledge grew fast by,
Knowledge of good, bought dear by knowing ill.
Southward through Eden went a river large,
Nor chang'd his course, but through the shaggy hill
Pass'd underneath ingulf'd; for God had thrown
That mountain as his garden mound, high rais'd
Upon the rapid current, which through veins
Of porous earth with kindly thirst up drawn,
Rose a fresh fountain, and with many a rill
Water'd the garden; thence united fell
Down the steep glade, and met the nether flood,
Which from his darksome passage now appears,
And now divided into four main streams,
Runs diverse, wand'ring many a famous realm
And country, whereof here needs no account;
But rather to tell how, if Art could tell,
How from that sapphire fount the crisped brooks,
Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold
With mazy error under pendent shades,
Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
Flow'rs worthy of Paradsie, which not nice Art
In beds and curious knots, but Nature boon

Pour'd forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain,
Both where the morning sun first warmly smote
The open field, and where the unpierc'd shade
Imbrown'd the noon-tide bow'rs: Thus was this place
A happy rural seat of various view;
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm;
Others, whose fruit burnished with golden rind
Hung amiable: Hesperian fables true,
If true, here only, and of delicious taste.
Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks
Grazing the tender herb, were interpos'd:
Or palmy hillock, or the flow'ry lap
Of some irriguous valley spread her store:
Flow'rs of all hue, and without thorn the rose.
Another side, umbrageous grots, and caves
Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine
Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps
Luxuriant: meanwhile murm'ring waters fall
Down the slope hills, dispers'd, or in a lake,
(That to the fringed bank with myrtle crown'd
Her crystal mirror holds) unite their streams.
The birds their choir apply: airs, vernal airs,
Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
The trembling leaves, while universal Pan,
Knit with the Graces, and the Hours, in dance
Led on th' eternal spring. Not that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpine gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flow'r, by gloomy Dis
Was gather'd; which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world: nor that sweet grove
Of Daphne by Orontes, and th' inspir'd
Castalian spring, might with this Paradise
Of Eden strive: nor that Nyseian isle
Girt with the river Triton, where old Cham,
(Whom Gentiles Ammon call, and Libyan Jove)
Hid Amalthea, and her florid son
Young Bacchus, from his stepdame Rhea's eye:
Nor where Abassin Kings their issue guard,
Mount Amara (though this by some suppos'd
True Paradise) under the Æthiop Line
By Nilus head, inclos'd with shining rock,
A whole day's journey high; but wide remote

rom this Assyrian garden: where the fiend
Saw undelighted all delight, all kind
Of living creatures, new to sight, and strange.
Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,
Godlike erect! with native honour clad
In naked majesty, seem'd lords of all:
And worthy seem'd; for in their looks divine
The image of their glorious Maker shone,
Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure;
Severe, but in true filial freedom plac'd,
Whence true authority in men: though both
Not equal, as their sex not equal seem'd:
For contemplation he, and valour form'd;
For softness she, and sweet attractive grace;
He for God only; she for God in him.
His fair large front, and eye sublime, declar'd
Absolute rule; and hyacinthin locks
Round from his parted forelock manly hung
Clustring, but not beneath his shoulders broad:
She as a veil, down to the slender waist
Her unadorned golden tresses wore,
Disshevel'd; but in wanton ringlets wav'd,
As the vine curls her tendrils, which imply'd
Subjection, but requir'd with gentle sway;
And by her yielded, by him best receiv'd:
Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
And sweet reluctant amorous delay.
Nor those mysterious parts were then conceal'd;
Then was not guilty shame, dishonest shame
Of nature's works: honour dishonourable!
Sin-bred! how have ye troubl'd all mankind
With shews instead, mere shews of seeming pure,
And banish'd from man's life his happiest life,
Simplicity, and spotless innocence?
So pass'd they naked on, nor shun'd the sight
Of God or Angel, for they thought no ill.
So hand in hand they pass'd, the loveliest pair
That ever since in love's embraces met;
Adam the goodliest man of men since born
His sons; the fairest of her daughters Eve.
Under a tuft of shade, that on a green
Stood whisp'ring soft, by a fresh fountain side

They sat them down; and after no more toil
Of their sweet gard'ning labour than suffic'd
To recommend cool zephyr, and made ease
More easy, wholesome thirst and appetite
More grateful, to their supper fruits they fell,
Nectarine fruits, which the compliant boughs
Yielded them, side-long as they sat recline
On the soft downy bank damask'd with flowers:
The savoury pulp they chew, and in the rind
Still as they thirsted scoop the brimming stream;
Nor gentle purpose, nor endearing smiles
Wanted, nor youthful dalliance, as beseems
Fair couple, link'd in happy nuptial league,
Alone as they. About them frisking play'd
All beasts of th' earth, since wild, and of all chase
In wood or wilderness, forest or den:
Sporting the lion ramp'd, and in his paw
Dandled the kid; bears, tigers, ounces, pards,
Gambol'd before them; th' unwieldy elephant
To make them mirth, us'd all his might, and wreath'd
His lithe proboscis; close the serpent sly
Insinuating, wove with Gordian twine
His braided train, and of his fatal guile
Gave proof unheeded: others on the grass
Couch'd, and now fill'd with pasture, gazing sat,
Or bedward ruminating; for the sun
Declin'd was hasting now with prone career
To th' ocean isles, and in th' ascending scale
Of Heav'n the stars that usher evening rose:
When Satan, still in gaze, as first he stood,
Scarce thus at length fail'd speech recover'd sad.
  O Hell! what do mine eyes with grief behold!
Into our room of bliss thus high advanc'd
Creatures of other mould; earth-born perhaps,
Not spirits; ye to heav'nly spirits bright
Little inferior; whom my thoughts pursue
With wonder, and could love, so lively shines
In them divine resemblance, and such grace
The hand that form'd 'em on their shape hath pour'd.
Ah gentle pair! ye little think how nigh
Your change approaches; when all these delights
Will vanish, and deliver ye to woe;

More woe, the more your taste is now of joy:
Happy! but for so happy ill secur'd
Long to continue; and this high seat your heav'n,
Ill-fenc'd for heav'n, to keep out such a foe
As now is enter'd: yet no purpos'd foe
To you, whom I could pity thus forlorn,
Though I unpitied. League with you I seek,
And mutual amity, so strait, so close,
That I with you must dwell, or you with me
Henceforth: my dwelling haply may not please,
Like this fair paradise, your sense; yet such
Accept, your maker's work; he gave it me,
Which I as freely give: hell shall unfold,
To entertain you two, her widest gates,
And send forth all her kings; there will be room,
(Not like these narrow limits,) to receive
Your numerous offspring; if no better place,
Thank him who puts me loth to this revenge
On you, who wrong me not, for him who wrong'd.
And should I at your harmless innocence
Melt, (as I do) yet public reason just,
Honour, and empire, with revenge enlarg'd,
By conqu'ring this new world, compels me now
To do, what else (though damn'd) I should abhor.
So spake the fiend; and with necessity,
(The tyrant's plea) excus'd his devilish deeds:
Then from his lofty stand on that high tree,
Down he alights among the sportful herd
Of those four-footed kinds; himself now one,
Now other, as their shape best serv'd his end
Nearer to view his prey, and unespy'd,
To mark what of their state he more might learn,
By word, or action mark'd: about them round,
A lion now he stalks with fiery glare;
Then, as a tiger, who by chance hath spy'd,
In some purlieu, two gentle fawns at play,
Strait couches close, then rising changes oft
His couchant watch, as one who chose his ground,
Whence rushing, he might surest seize them both,
Grip'd in each paw: when Adam, first of men,
To first of women, Eve, thus moving speech,
Turn'd him, all ear, to hear new utterance flow.

Sole partner, and sole part of all these joys!
Dearer thyself than all! needs must the pow'r
That made us, and for us this ample world,
Be infinitely good, and of His good
As liberal and free, as infinite;
That rais'd us from the dust, and plac'd us here
In all this happiness, who at His hand
Have nothing merited, nor can perform
Aught whereof he hath need: He! who requires
From us no other service than to keep
This one, this easy charge, of all the trees
In Paradise, that bear delicious fruit
So various, not to taste that only tree
Of knowledge, planted by the tree of life;
So near grows death to life, whate'er death is,
Some dreadful thing no doubt; for well thou know'st
God hath pronounc'd it death to taste that tree,
The only sign of our obedience left,
Among so many signs of pow'r and rule
Conferr'd upon us, and dominion given
Over all other creatures that possess
Earth, air, and sea. Then let us not think hard
One easy prohibition, who enjoy
Free leave so large to all things else, and choice
Unlimited of manifold delights:
But let us ever praise him and extol
His bounty, following our delightful task,
To prune these growing plants, and tend these flowers,
Which were it toilsome, yet with thee were sweet.
To whom thus Eve reply'd. O thou for whom
And from whom I was form'd, flesh of thy flesh,
And without whom am to no end, my guide
And head, what thou hast said is just and right:
For we to him indeed all praises owe,
And daily thanks; I chiefly, who enjoy
So far the happier lot, enjoying thee
Pre-eminent by so much odds, while thou
Like consort to thyself canst no where find.
That day I oft remember, when from sleep
I first awak'd, and found myself repos'd
Under a shade of flow'rs, much wond'ring where
And what I was; whence thither brought, and how:

Not distant far from thence a murm'ring sound
Of waters issued from a cave, and spread
Into a liquid plain, then stood unmov'd
Pure as th' expanse of Heav'n; I thither went
With inexperienc'd thought, and laid me down
On the green bank, to look into the clear
Smooth lake, that to me seem'd another sky.
As I bent down to look, just opposite
A shape within the wat'ry gleam appear'd,
Bending to look on me: I started back,
It started back; but pleas'd I soon return'd;
Pleas'd it return'd as soon, with answ'ring looks
Of sympathy and love: there I had fix'd
Mine eyes till now, and pin'd with vain desire,
Had not a voice thus warn'd me; "What thou seest,
What there thou seest, fair Creature, is thyself;
With thee it came and goes: but follow me,
And I will bring thee where no shadow stays
Thy coming, and thy soft embraces, he
Whose image thou art; him thou shalt enjoy
Inseparably thine, to him shalt bear
Multitudes like thyself, and thence be call'd
Mother of human race." What could I do,
But follow strait, invisibly thus led,
Till I espy'd thee? fair indeed and tall,
Under a plantain; yet methought less fair,
Less winning soft, less amiably mild,
Than that smooth watry image: back I turn'd;
Thou following cry'st aloud, Return, fair Eve;
Whom fly'st thou? whom thou fly'st, of him thou art,
His flesh, his bone; to give thee being, I lent
Out of my side to thee, nearest my heart,
Substantial life, to have thee by my side
Henceforth an individual solace dear;
Part of my soul I seek thee, and thee claim
My other half!—with that thy gentle hand
Seiz'd mine; I yielded, and from that time see
How beauty is excell'd by manly grace
And wisdom, which alone is truly fair.
  So spake our general mother, and with eyes
Of conjugal attraction unreprov'd,
And meek surrender, half embracing lean'd

On our first father; half her swelling breast
Naked met his under the flowing gold
Of her loose tresses hid: he in delight
Both of her beauty and submissive charms
Smil'd with superior love, as Jupiter
On Juno smiles, when he impregns the clouds
That shed May flow'rs; and press'd her matron lip
With kisses pure: aside the Devil turn'd
For envy; yet with jealous leer malign
Ey'd them askance, and to himself thus plain'd:
  Sight hateful, sight tormenting! thus these two
Imparadis'd in one another's arms,
The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill
Of bliss on bliss; while I to Hell am thrust,
Where neither joy, nor love, but fierce desire,
Among our other torments not the least,
Still unfulfill'd with pain of longing pines.
Yet let me not forget what I have gain'd
From their own mouths: all is not theirs it seems;
One fatal tree there stands, of knowledge call'd,
Forbidden them to taste. Knowledge forbidden?
Suspicious, reasonless. Why should their Lord
Envy them that? can it be sin to know?
Can it be death? and do they only stand
By ignorance? is that their happy state,
The proof of their obedience and their faith?
O fair foundation laid whereon to build
Their ruin! Hence I will excite their minds
With more desire to know, and to reject
Envious commands, invented with design
To keep them low, whom knowledge might exalt
Equal with Gods: aspiring to be such,
They taste and die: what likelier can ensue?
But first with narrow search I must walk round
This garden, and no corner leave unspy'd;
A chance but chance may lead where I may meet
Some wand'ring Spirit of Heav'n by fountain side,
Or in thick shade retir'd from him to draw
What further would be learn'd. Live while ye may,
Yet happy pair; enjoy, till I return,
Short pleasures, for long woes are to succeed.
  So saying, his proud step he scornful turn'd,

But with sly circumspection, and began
Through wood, through waste, o'er hill, o'er dale, his roam.
Meanwhile in utmost longitude, where Heav'n
With earth and ocean meets, the setting sun
Slowly descended, and with right aspect
Against the eastern gate of Paradise
Levell'd his evening rays: it was a rock
Of alabaster, pil'd up to the clouds,
Conspicuous far, winding with one ascent
Accessible from earth, one entrance high;
The rest was craggy cliff, that overhung
Still as it rose, impossible to climb.
Betwixt these rocky pillars Gabriel sat,
Chief of th' angelic guards, awaiting night;
About him exercis'd heroic games
Th' unarm'd youth of Heav'n, but nigh at hand
Celestial armoury, shields, helms, and spears,
Hung high, with diamond flaming, and with gold.
Thither came Uriel, gliding through the even
On a sun beam, swift as a shooting star
In autumn thwarts the night; when vapours fir'd
Impress the air, and shew the mariner
From what point of his compass to beware
Impetuous winds: he thus began in haste.
Gabriel, to thee thy course by lot hath given
Charge and strict watch, that to this happy place
No evil thing approach or enter in.
This day at height at noon came to my sphere
A spirit, zealous, as he seem'd, to know
More of th' Almighty's works, and chiefly Man,
God's latest image: I describ'd his way,
Bent all on speed, and mark'd his airy gait;
But in the mount that lies from Eden north,
Where he first lighted, soon discern'd his looks
Alien from Heav'n, with passions foul obscur'd:
Mine eye pursued him still, but under shade
Lost sight of him: one of the banish'd crew,
I fear, hath ventur'd from the deep, to raise
New troubles; him thy care must be to find.
To whom the winged warrior thus return'd:
Uriel, no wonder if thy perfect sight,

Amid the sun's bright circle where thou sitt'st,
See far and wide: in at this gate none pass
The vigilance here plac'd, but such as come
Well known from Heav'n; and since meridian hour
No creature thence: if Spirit of other sort,
So minded. have o'er-leáp'd these earthy bounds
On purpose, hard thou know'st it to exclude
Spiritual substance with corporeal bar.
But if within the circuit of these walks,
In whatsoever shape he lurk, of whom
Thou tell'st, by morrow dawning I shall know.
So promis'd he; and Uriel to his charge
Return'd on that bright beam, whose point now rais'd
Bore him slope downward to the sun, now fall'n
Beneath th' Azores; whither the prime orb,
Incredible how swift, had thither roll'd
Diurnal, or this less voluble earth,
By shorter flight to th' east, had left him there
Arraying with reflected purple and gold
The clouds that on his western throne attend.
Now came still evening on, and twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung;
Silence was pleas'd: now glow'd the firmament
With living sapphires; Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen unveil'd her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.
When Adam thus to Eve. Fair Consort, th' hour
Of night, and all things now retir'd to rest,
Mind us of like repose, since God hath set
Labour and rest, as day and night to men
Successive; and the timely dew of sleep
Now falling with soft slumb'rous weight inclines
Our eye-lids: other creatures all day long
Rove idle, unemploy'd, and less need rest;
Man hath his daily work of body or mind
Appointed, which declares his dignity,

And the regard of Heav'n on all his ways,
While other animals unactive range,
And of their doings God takes no account.
To-morrow, e'er fresh morning streak the east
With first approach of light, we must be risen,
And at our pleasant labour to reform
Yon flowry arbours, yonder alleys green,
Our walk at noon, with branches overgrown,
That mock our scant manuring, and require
More hands than ours to lop their wanton growth:
Those blossoms also, and those dropping gums,
That lie bestrown unsightly and unsmooth,
Ask riddance, if we mean to tread with ease;
Meanwhile, as Nature wills, night bids us rest.
  To whom thus Eve with perfect beauty adorn'd:
My Author and Disposer, what thou bidst
Unargued I obey; so God ordains;
God is thy law, thou mine: to know no more
Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise.
With thee conversing, I forget all time;
All seasons and their change, all please alike.
Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun,
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit and flower,
Glist'ring with dew; fragrant the fertile earth
After soft show'rs; and sweet the coming on
Of grateful evening mild; then silent night
With this her solemn bird, and this fair moon,
And these the gems of Heav'n, her starry train:
But neither breath of morn, when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds; nor rising sun
On this delightful land; nor herb, fruit, flower,
Glist'ring with dew; nor fragrance after showers;
Nor grateful evening mild; nor silent night
With this her solemn bird; nor walk by moon,
Or glittering star-light, without thee is sweet.
But wherefore all night long shine these? for whom
This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes?
  To whom our general ancestor reply'd:
Daughter of God and Man, accomplish'd Eve!
These have their course to finish round the earth,

By morrow evening, and from land to land
In order, though to nations yet unborn,
Ministring light prepar'd, they set and rise;
Lest total darkness should by night regain
Her old possession, and extinguish life
In nature and all things, which these soft fires
Not only enlighten, but with kindly heat
Of various influence foment and warm,
Temper or nourish, or in part shed down
Their stellar virtue on all kinds that grow
On earth, made hereby apter to receive
Perfection from the sun's more potent ray.
These then, though unbeheld in deep of night,
Shine not in vain; nor think, though men were none,
That Heav'n would want spectators, God want praise:
Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep:
All these with ceaseless praise his works behold
Both day and night: how often from the steep
Of echoing hill or thicket have we heard
Celestial voices to the midnight air,
Sole, or responsive each to other's note,
Singing their great Creator? oft in bands
While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
With heav'nly touch of instrumental sounds
In full harmonic number join'd, their songs
Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to Heaven.
  Thus talking hand in hand alone they pass'd
On to their blissful bow'r; it was a place
Chosen by the sov'reign Planter, when he fram'd
All things to Man's delightful use; the roof
Of thickest covert was inwoven shade,
Laurel and myrtle, and what higher grew
Of firm and fragrant leaf, on either side
Acanthus, and each odorous bushy shrub
Fenc'd up the verdant wall; each beauteous flower,
Iris all hues, roses, and jessamin,
Rear'd high their flourish'd heads between, and wrought
Mosaic; underfoot the violet,
Crocus and hyacinth, with rich inlay
Broider'd the ground, more colour'd than with stone
Of costliest emblem: other creature here,

Beast, bird, insect, or worm, durst enter none;
Such was their awe of Man. In shadier bower
More sacred and sequester'd, though but feign'd,
Pan or Sylvanus never slept, nor Nymph,
Nor Faunus haunted. Here in close recess
With flowers, garlands, and sweet smelling herbs
Espoused Eve deck'd first her nuptial bed,
And heav'nly quires the hymenæan sung,
What day the genial Angel to our sire
Brought her in naked beauty more adorn'd,
More lovely than Pandora, whom the Gods
Endow'd with all their gifts, and O too like
In sad event, when to th'unwiser son
Of Japhet brought by Hermes, she ensnar'd
Mankind with her fair looks, to be aveng'd
On him who had stole Jove's authentic fire.
  Thus at their shady lodge arriv'd, both stood,
Both turn'd, and under open sky ador'd
The God that made both sky, air, earth, and heaven,
Which they beheld, the moon's resplendent globe,
And starry pole: Thou also mad'st the night,
Maker omnipotent, and thou the day,
Which we in our appointed work employ'd
Have finish'd, happy in our mutual help
And mutual love, the crown of all our bliss
Ordain'd by thee, and this delicious place,
For us too large, where thy abundance wants
Partakers, and uncropt falls to the ground,
But thou hast promis'd from us two a race
To fill the earth, who shall with us extol
Thy goodness infinite, both when we wake,
And when we seek, as now, thy gift of sleep.
  This said unanimous, and other rites
Observing none, but adoration pure,
Which God likes best, into their inmost bower
Handed they went; and eas'd the putting off
These troublesome disguises which we wear,
Strait side by side were laid; nor turn'd I ween
Adam from his fair spouse, nor Eve the rites
Mysterious of connubial love refus'd:
Whatever hypocrites austerely talk
Of purity, and place, and innocence,

Defaming as impure what God declares
Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all.
Our Maker bids increase; who bids abstain
But our destroyer, foe to God and Man?
Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring, sole propriety
In paradise! of all things common else.
By thee adult'rous lust was driven from men
Among the bestial herds to range; by thee,
Founded in reason, loyal, just and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son, and brother, first were known.
Far be it, that I should write thee sin or blame,
Or think thee unbefitting holiest place,
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets,
Whose bed is undefil'd and chaste pronounc'd,
Present, or past, as saints and patriarchs us'd.
Here love his golden shafts employs, here lights
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings,
Reigns here and revels; not in the bought smile
Of harlots, loveless, joyless, unendear'd,
Casual fruition; nor in court amours,
Mix'd dance, or wanton mask, or midnight ball,
Or serenade, which the starved lover sings
To his proud fair, best quitted with disdain.
These lull'd by nightingales embracing slept,
And on their naked limbs the flow'ry roof
Shower'd roses which the morn repair'd. Sleep on,
Blest pair; and O yet happiest, if ye seek
No happier state, and know to know no more.
  Now had night measur'd with her shadowy cone
Half way up hill this vast sublunar vault,
And from their ivory port the Cherubim
Forth issuing at th' accustom'd hour stood arm'd
To their night watches in warlike parade,
When Gabriel to his next in pow'r thus spake:
  Uzziel, half these draw off, and coast the south
With strictest watch; these other wheel the north;
Our circuit meets full west. As flame they part,
Half wheeling to the shield, half to the spear.
From these, two strong and subtle Sp'rits he call'd
That near him stood, and gave them thus in charge:

Ithuriel and Zephon, with wing'd speed
Search through this garden, leave unsearch'd no nook;
But chiefly where those two fair creature's lodge,
Now laid perhaps asleep, secure of harm.
This evening from the sun's decline arriv'd,
Who tells of some infernal Spirit, seen
Hitherward bent (who could have thought?) escap'd
The bars of Hell, on errand bad, no doubt;
Such where ye find, seize fast and hither bring.
So saying, on he led his radiant files,
Dazzling the moon; these to the bow'r direct
In search of whom they sought: him there they found
Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve,
Assaying by his devilish art to reach
The organs of her fancy, and with them forge
Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams:
Or if, inspiring venom, he might taint
Th' animal spirits, that from pure blood arise
Like gentle breaths from rivers pure, thence raise
At last distemper'd, discontented thoughts,
Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires,
Blown up with high conceits ingend'ring pride.
Him thus intent Ithuriel, with his spear,
Touch'd lightly; for no falsehood can endure
Touch of celestial temper, but returns
Of force to its own likeness; up he starts,
Discover'd and surpris'd. As when a spark
Lights on a heap of nitrous powder, laid
Fit for the tun, some magazine to store,
Against a rumour'd war, the smutty grain,
With sudden blaze diffus'd, inflames the air:
So started up, in his own shape, the Fiend.
Back stept those two fair Angels, half amaz'd,
So sudden to behold the grisly king;
Yet thus, unmov'd with fear, accost him soon:
Which of those rebel Sp'rits adjudg'd to Hell
Com'st thou, escap'd thy prison? and transform'd,
Why sat'st thou like an enemy in wait,
Here watching at the head of these that sleep?
Know ye not then, said Satan, fill'd with scorn,
Know ye not me? ye knew me once, no mate
For you; there sitting where you durst not soar:
Not to know me argues yourselves unknown,

The lowest of your throng; or if ye know,
Why ask ye, and superfluous begin
Your message, like to end as much in vain?
To whom thus Zephon, answ'ring scorn with scorn:
Think not, revolted Sp'rit, thy shape the same,
Or undiminish'd brightness to be known,
As when thou stood'st in heav'n, upright and pure;
That glory then, when thou no more wast good,
Departed from thee'; and thou resemblest now
Thy sin and place of doom, obscure and foul.
But come; for thou, be sure, shall give account
To him who sent us, whose charge is to keep
This place inviolable, and these from harm.
So spake the Cherub; and his grave rebuke,
Severe in youthful beauty, added grace
Invincible: abash'd the Devil stood,
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
Virtue' in her shape how lovely; saw and pin'd
His loss; but chiefly to find here observ'd
His lustre visibly impair'd; yet seem'd
Undaunted. If I must contend, said he,
Best with the best, the sender, not the sent;
Or all at once; more glory will be won,
Or less be lost. Thy fear, said Zephon bold,
Will save us trial what the least can do
Single against thee wicked, and thence weak.
The Fiend reply'd not, overcome with rage;
But like a proud steed rein'd, went haughty on,
Champing his iron curb: to strive or fly
He held it vain; awe from above had quell'd
His heart, not else dismay'd. Now drew they nigh
The western point, where those half-rounding guards
Just met, and closing stood in squadron join'd,
Awaiting next command. To whom their chief
Gabriël from the front thus call'd aloud:
O friends, I hear the tread of nimble feet
Hasting this way, and now, by glimpse discern
Ithuriel and Zephon through the shade,
And with them comes a third of regal port,
But faded splendour wan; who, by his gait
And fierce demeanour, seems the prince of Hell,
Not likely to part hence without contest;
Stand firm; for in his look defiance lours.

He scarce had ended, when those two approach'd,
And brief related whom they brought, where found,
How busied, in what form and posture couch'd.
To whom, with stern regard, thus Gabriel spake:
Why hast thou, Satan, broke the bounds prescrib'd
To thy transgression, and disturb'd the charge
Of others, who approve not to transgress
By thy example, but have pow'r and right
To question thy bold entrance on this place;
Employ'd, it seems, to violate sleep, and those
Whose dwelling God hath planted here in bliss?
To whom thus Satan, with contemptuous brow:
Gabriel, thou hadst in Heav'n th' esteem of wise,
And such I held thee; but this question ask'd,
Puts me in doubt. Lives there who loves his pain?
Who would not, finding way, break loose from hell,
Tho' thither doom'd? Thou wouldst thyself, no doubt,
And boldly venture to whatever place
Farthest from pain, where thou might'st hope to change
Torment with ease, and soonest recompense
Dole with delight, which in this place I sought;
To thee no reason, who know'st only good,
But evil hast not try'd: and wilt object
His will who bound us? let him surer bar
His iron gates, if he intends our stay
In that dark durance: thus much what was ask'd.
The rest is true; they found me where they say;
But that implies not violence or harm.
Thus he in scorn. The warlike Angel mov'd,
Disdainfully, half smiling, thus reply'd.
O loss of one in Heav'n, to judge of wise,
Since Satan fell, whom folly overthrew,
And now returns him, from his prison 'scap'd,
Gravely in doubt, whether to hold them wise
Or not who ask what boldness brought him hither,
Unlicens'd, from his bounds in Hell prescrib'd;
So wise he judges it to fly from pain,
However, and to 'scape his punishment.
So judge thou still, presumptuous, till the wrath,
Which thou incurr'st by flying, meet thy flight
Sev'nfold, and scourge that wisdom back to Hell,
Which taught thee yet no better, that no pain
Can equal anger infinite provok'd.

But wherefore thou alone? wherefore with thee
Came not all Hell broke loose? is pain to them
Less pain, less to be fled? or thou than they
Less hardy to endure? courageous Chief!
The first in flight from pain? hadst thou alledg'd
To thy deserted host this cause of flight,
Thou surely hadst not come sole fugitive.
  To which the Fiend thus answer'd, frowning stern:
Not that I less endure, or shrink from pain,
Insulting Angel; well thou know'st, I stood
Thy fiercest, when in battle to thy aid
The blasting vollied thunder made all speed,
And seconded thy else not dreaded spear.
But still thy words at random, as before,
Argue thy inexperience, what behoves
From hard assays and ill successes past
A faithful leader, not to hazard all
Through ways of danger by himself untry'd:
I therefore, I alone first undertook
To wing the desolate abyss, and spy
This new created world, whereof in Hell
Fame is not silent; here in hope to find
Better abode, and my afflicted Powers
To settle here on earth, or in mid air;
Tho' for possession put to try once more
What thou and thy gay legions dare against;
Whose easier business were to serve their Lord
High up in Heav'n, with songs to hymn his throne,
And practis'd distances to cringe, not fight.
  To whom the warrior angel soon reply'd.
To say, and strait unsay, pretending first
Wise to fly pain, professing next the spy,
Argues no leader, but a liar trac'd,
Satan, and couldst thou faithful add? O name,
O sacred name of faithfulness profan'd!
Faithful to whom? to thy rebellious crew,
Army of fiends? fit body to fit head.
Was this your discipline and faith engag'd,
Your military obedience, to dissolve
Allegiance to th' acknowledg'd Power Supreme?
And thou, sly hypocrite, who now wouldst seem
Patron of liberty, who more than thou
Once fawn'd, and cring'd, and servilely ador'd

Heav'ns awful monarch? wherefore but in hope
To dispossess him, and thyself to reign?
But mark what I arread thee now. Avaunt;
Fly thither whence thou fledst: if from this hour
Within these hallow'd limits thou appear,
Back to th' infernal pit I drag thee chain'd,
And seal thee so, as henceforth not to scorn
The facile gates of Hell too slightly barr'd.
So threaten'd he; but Satan to no threats
Gave heed, but waxing more in rage, reply'd:
  Then, when I am thy captive, talk of chains,
Proud limitary Cherub; but e'er then
Far heavier load thyself expect to feel
From my prevailing arm, tho' Heaven's King
Ride on thy wings, and thou, with thy compeers,
Us'd to the yoke, draw'st his triumphant wheels
In progress through the road of Heav'n star-pav'd.
  While thus he spake, th' angelic squadron bright
Turn'd fiery red, sharp'ning in mooned horns
Their phalanx, and began to hem him round
With ported spears, as thick as when a field
Of Ceres ripe for harvest waving bend
Her bearded grove of ears, which way the wind
Sways them; the careful ploughman doubting stands,
Lest on the threshing floor his hopeful sheaves
Prove chaff. On t'other side, Satan alarm'd,
Collecting all his might, dilated stood,
Like Teneriff or Atlas unremov'd:
His stature reach'd the sky, and on his crest
Sat horror plum'd; nor wanted in his grasp
What seem'd both spear and shield. Now dreadful deeds
Might have ensu'd, not only Paradise
In this commotion, but the starry cope
Of Heav'n perhaps, or all the elements,
At least had gone to wreck, disturb'd and torn
With violence of this conflict, had not soon
Th' Eternal, to prevent such horrid fray,
Hung forth in Heav'n his golden scales, yet seen
Betwixt Astrea and the Scorpion sign,
Wherein all things created first he weigh'd,
The pendulous round earth, with balanc'd air
In counterpoise, now ponders all events,
Battles and realms: in these he put two weights,

The sequel each of parting and of fight;
The latter quick up flew, and kick'd the beam;
Which Gabriel spying, thus bespake the Fiend:
  Satan, I know thy strength, and thou know'st mine;
Neither our own, but giv'n; what folly then
To boast what arms can do? since thine no more
Than Heav'n permits, nor mine, though doubled now,
To trample thee as mire: for proof, look up,
And read thy lot in yon celestial sign,
Where thou art weigh'd, and shewn how light, how weak,
If thou resist. The Fiend look'd up, and knew
His mounted scale aloft; nor more; but fled
Murmuring, and with him fled the shades of night.

BOOK V.

THE ARGUMENT.

Morning approached, Eve relates to Adam her troublesome dream; he likes it not, yet comforts her: They come forth to their day labours: Their morning hymn at the door of their bower: God, to render man inexcusable, sends Raphael to admonish him of his obedience, of his free estate, of his enemy near at hand, who he is, and why his enemy, and whatever else may avail Adam to know. Raphael comes down to Paradise; his appearance described; his coming discerned by Adam afar off, sitting at the door of his bower; he goes out to meet him, brings him to his lodge, entertains him with the choicest fruits of Paradise, got together by Eve; their discourse at table: Raphael performs his message, minds Adam of his state and of his enemy; relates, at Adam's request, who that enemy is, and how he came to be so, beginning from his first revolt in Heaven, and the occafion thereof; how he drew his legions after him to the parts of the north, and there incited them to rebel with him; persuading all but only Abdiel, a Seraph, who in argument dissuades and opposes him; then forsakes him.

Now morn her rosy steps in th' eastern clime
Advancing, sow'd the earth with orient pearl,
When Adam wak'd, so custom'd; for his sleep
Was airy light, from pure digestion bred,
And temp'rate vapours bland, which th' only sound
Of leaves and fuming rill, Aurora's fan,

Lightly dispers'd, and the shrill matin song
Of birds on every bough; so much the more
His wonder was to find unwaken'd Eve,
With tresses discompos'd, and glowing cheek,
As through unquiet rest: he on his side
Leaning, half-rais'd, with looks of cordial love
Hung over her enamour'd, and beheld
Beauty, which, whether waking or asleep,
Shot forth peculiar graces; then with voice
Mild, as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes,
Her hand soft touching, whisper'd thus: Awake,
My fairest, my espous'd, my latest found,
Heav'n's last best gift, my ever new delight,
Awake; the morning shines, and the fresh field
Calls us; we lose the prime, to mark how spring
Our tender plants, how blows the citron grove,
What drops the myrrh, and what the balmy reed,
How nature paints her colours, how the bee
Sits on the bloom, extracting liquid sweet.
  Such whisp'ring wak'd her, but with startled eye
On Adam, whom embracing, thus she spake:
  O sole, in whom my thoughts find all repose,
My glory, my perfection! glad I see
Thy face, and morn return'd; for I this night
(Such night till this I never pass'd) have dream'd,
If dream'd, not as I oft am wont, of thee,
Works of day past, or morrow's next design;
But of offence and trouble, which my mind
Knew never till this irksome night: Methought
Close at mine ear one called me forth to walk
With gentle voice, I thought it thine; it said,
Why sleep'st thou, Eve? now is the pleasant time,
The cool, the silent, save where silence yields
To the night-warbling bird, that now awake
Tunes sweetest his love-labour'd song; now reigns
Full orb'd the moon, and with more pleasant light
Shadowy sets off the face of things; in vain,
If none regard: Heaven wakes with all his eyes,
Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire?
In whose sight all things joy, with ravishment
Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze.
I rose as at thy call, but found thee not;
To find thee I directed then my walk;

And on, methought, alone I pass'd through ways
That brought me on a sudden to the tree
Of interdicted knowledge: fair it seem'd,
Much fairer to my fancy than by day:
And as I wond'ring look'd, beside it stood
One shap'd and wing'd like one of those from Heaven
By us oft seen; his dewy locks distill'd
Ambrosia; on that tree he also gaz'd;
And, O fair plant! said he, with fruit surcharg'd,
Deigns none to ease thy load, and taste thy sweet,
Nor God, nor Man? is knowledge so despis'd?
Or envy', or what reserve forbids to taste?
Forbid who will, none shall from me withhold
Longer thy offer'd good; why else set here?
This said, he paus'd not, but, with vent'rous arm,
He pluck'd, he tasted; me damp horror chill'd
At such bold words, vouch'd with a deed so bold:
But he thus, overjoy'd; O fruit divine!
Sweet of thyself, but much more sweet thus cropt!
Forbidden here, it seems, as only fit
For Gods, yet able to make Gods of Men:
And why not Gods of Men, since good, the more
Communicated, more abundant grows,
The author not impair'd, but honour'd more?
Here, happy creature, fair angelic Eve,
Partake thou also: happy tho' thou art,
Happier thou may'st be, worthier canst not be:
Taste this, and be henceforth among the Gods,
Thyself a Goddess; not to earth confin'd,
But sometimes in the air, as we; sometimes
Ascend to Heav'n, by merit thine, and see
What life the Gods live there, and such live thou.
So saying, he drew nigh, and to me held,
Ev'n to my mouth, of that same fruit held part,
Which he had pluck'd; the pleasant savoury smell
So quicken'd appetite, that I, methought,
Could not but taste. Forthwith up to the clouds
With him I flew, and underneath beheld
The earth outstretch'd immense, a prospect wide
And various: wond'ring at my flight and change
To this high exaltation; suddenly
My guide was gone, and I, methought, sunk down,
And fell asleep; but O how glad I wak'd,

To find this but a dream! Thus Eve her night
Related, and thus Adam answer'd sad:
  Best image of myself, and dearer half,
The trouble of thy thoughts this night in sleep
Affects me equally; nor can I like
This uncouth dream, of evil sprung I fear;
Yet evil whence? in thee can harbour none,
Created pure. But know that in the soul
Are many lesser faculties, that serve
Reason as chief: among these fancy next
Her office holds; of all external things
Which the five watchful senses represent,
She forms imaginations, airy shapes,
Which reason joining or disjoining, frames
All what we' affirm or what deny, and call
Our knowledge or opinion; then retires
Into her private cell when Nature rests.
Oft in her absence mimic fancy wakes
To imitate her; but misjoining shapes,
Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams,
Ill matching words and deeds, long past or late.
Some such resemblances, methinks, I find
Of our late evening's talk, in this thy dream,
But with addition strange; yet be not sad:
Evil into the mind of God or Man
May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave
No spot or blame behind: Which gives me hope
That what in sleep thou didst abhor to dream,
Waking thou never wilt consent to do.
Be not dishearten'd then, nor cloud those looks,
That wont to be more cheerful and serene,
Than when fair morning first smiles on the world;
And let us to our fresh employments rise
Among the groves, the fountains, and the flowers,
That open now their choicest bosom'd smells,
Reserv'd from night, and kept for thee in store.
  So cheer'd he his fair spouse, and she was cheer'd;
But silently a gentle tear let fall
From either eye, and wip'd them with her hair;
Two other precious drops that ready stood,
Each in their chrystal sluice, he, e'er they fell,
Kiss'd, as the gracious signs of sweet remorse
And pious awe, that fear'd to have offended.

So all was clear'd, and to the field they haste.
But first, from under shady arb'rous roof,
Soon as they forth were come to open sight
Of day-spring, and the sun, who scarce uprisen,
With wheels yet hov'ring o'er the ocean brim,
Shot parallel to th' earth his dewy ray,
Discovering in wide landskip all the east
Of Paradise, and Eden's happy plains.
Lowly they bow'd, adoring, and began
Their orisons, each morning duly paid
In various style; for neither various style
Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise
Their Maker, in fit strains pronounc'd or sung
Unmeditated, such prompt eloquence
Flow'd from their lips, in prose or numerous verse,
More tuneable than needed lute or harp,
To add more sweetness: and they thus began.
  These are thy glorious works, Parent of Good,
Almighty! thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair, thyself how wond'rous then!
Unspeakable! who sitt'st above these heav'ns
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and pow'r divine.
Speak ye who best can tell, ye sons of light,
Angels! for ye behold him, and with songs
And choral symphonies, day without night,
Circle his throne, rejoicing; ye in Heaven:
On earth join all ye creatures to extol
Him first, him last, him midst, and without end!
Fairest of stars, last in the train of night,
If better thou belong not to the dawn,
Sure pledge of day, that crown'st the smiling morn
With thy bright circlet, praise him in thy sphere,
While day arises, that sweet hour of prime.
Thou Sun, of this great world both eye and soul,
Acknowledge him thy greater, sound his praise
In thy eternal course, both when thou climb'st,
And when high noon hast gain'd, and when thou fall'st.
Moon, that now meet'st the orient sun, now fly'st,
With the fix'd stars, fix'd in their orb that flies,
And ye five other wand'ring fires that move
In mystic dance, not without song, resound

His praise, who out of darkness call'd up light.
Air, and ye elements, the eldest birth
Of Nature's womb, that in quaternion run
Perpetual circle, multiform, and mix
And nourish all things; let your ceaseless change
Vary to our great Maker still new praise.
Ye mists and exhalations that now rise
From hill or steaming lake, dusky or grey,
Till the sun paint your fleecy skirts with gold,
In honour to the world's great Author rise:
Whether to deck with clouds th' uncolour'd sky,
Or wet the thirsty earth with falling showers,
Rising or falling, still advance his praise.
His praise, ye winds, that from four quarters blow,
Breathe soft or loud; and wave your tops, ye pines,
With every plant, in sign of worship wave.
Fountains, and ye that warble as ye flow,
Melodious murmurs, warbling tune his praise.
Join voices, all ye living souls: ye birds,
That, singing, up to Heaven-gate ascend,
Bear on your wings, and in your notes his praise.
Ye that in waters glide, and ye that walk
The earth, and stately tread, or lowly creep;
Witness if I be silent, morn, or even,
To hill or valley, fountain or fresh shade,
Made vocal by my song, and taught his praise.
Hail! universal Lord, be bounteous still
To give us only good; and if the night
Have gather'd aught of evil, or conceal'd,
Disperse it, as now light dispels the dark.
So pray'd they innocent, and to their thoughts
Firm peace recover'd soon, and wonted calm.
On to their morning's rural work they haste
Among sweet dews and flow'rs; where any row
Of fruit-trees over-woody reach'd too far
Their pamper'd boughs, and needed hands to check
Fruitless embraces: or they led the vine
To wed her elm: she, spous'd, about him twines
Her marriageable arms, and with her brings
Her dow'r, th' adopted clusters, to adorn
His barren leaves. Them thus employ'd, beheld
With pity Heav'n's high King, and to him call'd

Raphael, that sociable Spirit, that deign'd
To travel with Tobias, and secur'd
His marriage with the sev'n-times wedded maid.
Raphael, said he, thou hear'st what stir on Earth
Satan, from Hell 'scap'd through the darksome gulf,
Hath rais'd in Paradise, and how disturb'd
This night the human pair, how he designs
In them at once to ruin all mankind.
Go therefore, half this day, as friend with friend,
Converse with Adam in what bow'r or shade
Thou find'st him, from the heat of noon retir'd,
To respite his day-labour with repast,
Or with repose; and such discourse bring on
As may advise him of his happy state,
Happiness in his pow'r left free to will,
Left to his own free will, his will tho' free,
Yet mutable; whence warn him to beware
He swerve not too secure: tell him withal
His danger, and from whom; what enemy,
Late fall'n himself from Heav'n, is plotting now
The fall of others from like state of bliss;
By violence? no; for that shall be withstood;
But by deceit and lies; this let him know,
Lest, wilfully transgressing, he pretend
Surprisal, unadmonish'd, unforewarn'd.
So spake the eternal Father, and fulfill'd
All justice: nor delay'd the winged Saint
After his charge receiv'd; but from among
Thousand celestial ardours, where he stood
Veil'd with his gorgeous wings, up springing light,
Flew thro' the midst of Heav'n; th' angelic quires,
On each hand parting, to his speed gave way
Through all th' empyreal road; till at the gate
Of Heav'n arriv'd, the gate self-open'd wide,
On golden hinges turning, as by work
Divine, the Sovereign architect had fram'd.
From hence no cloud, or, to obstruct his sight,
Star interpos'd, however small, he sees,
Not unconform to other shining globes,
Earth, and the gard'n of God, with cedars crown'd
Above all hills. As when by night the glass
Of Galileo, less assur'd, observes

Imagin'd lands and regions in the moon;
Or pilot, from amidst the Cyclades,
Delos or Samos, first appearing, kens
A cloudy spot. Down thither prone in flight
He speeds, and through the vast ethereal sky
Sails between worlds and worlds, with steady wing
Now on the polar winds, then with quick fan
Winnows the buxom air; till within soar
Of tow'ring eagles, t'all the fowls he seems
A phœnix, gaz'd by all, as that sole bird,
When to enshrine his reliques in the sun's
Bright temple, to Egyptian Thebes he flies.
At once on th' eastern cliff of Paradise
He lights, and to his proper shape returns,
A Seraph wing'd; six wings he wore, to shade
His lineaments divine; the pair that clad
Each shoulder broad, came mantling o'er his breast
With regal ornament; the middle pair
Girt like a starry zone his waist, and round
Skirted his loins and thighs with downy gold
And colours dipt in Heav'n; the third his feet
Shadow'd from either heel with feather'd mail,
Sky-tinctur'd grain! Like Maia's son he stood,
And shook his plumes, that heav'nly fragrance fill'd
The circuit wide. Straight knew him all the bands
Of Angels under watch; and to his state,
And to his message high, in honour rise;
For on some message high they guess'd him bound.
Their glittering tents he pass'd, and now is come
Into the blissful field, through groves of myrrh,
And flow'ring odours, cassia, nard, and balm;
A wilderness of sweets; for Nature here
Wanton'd as in her prime, and play'd at will
Her virgin fancies, pouring forth more sweet,
Wild above rule or art; enormous bliss!
Him through the spicy forest onward come
Adam discern'd, as in the door he sat
Of his cool bow'r: while now the mounted sun
Shot down direct his fervid rays to warm
Earth's inmost womb, more warmth than Adam needs:
And Eve within, due at her hour prepar'd
For dinner savoury fruits, of taste to please

True appetite, and not disrelish thirst
Of nect'rous draughts between, from milky stream,
Berry or grape: to whom thus Adam call'd.
  Haste hither, Eve, and worth thy sight, behold
Eastward among those trees, what glorious shape
Comes this way moving; seems another morn
Ris'n on mid-noon; some great behest from Heaven
To us perhaps he brings, and will vouchsafe
This day to be our guest. But go with speed,
And what thy stores contain, bring forth and pour
Abundance, fit to honour and receive
Our heav'nly stranger: well we may afford
Our givers their own gifts, and large bestow
From large bestow'd, where Nature multiplies
Her fertile growth, and by disburd'ning grows
More fruitful, which instructs us not to spare.
  To whom thus Eve. Adam, earth's hallow'd mould,
Of God inspir'd, small store will serve, where store,
All seasons, ripe for use, hangs on the stalk:
Save what by frugal storing firmness gains
To nourish, and superfluous moist consumes:
But I will haste, and from each bow and brake,
Each plant and juiciest gourd, will pluck such choice
To entertain our Angel guest, as he
Beholding shall confess, that here on earth
God hath dispens'd his bounties as in Heaven.
  So saying, with dispatchful looks in haste
She turns, on hospitable thoughts intent,
What choice to choose for delicacy best,
What order, so contriv'd, as not to mix
Tastes, not well join'd, inelegant, but bring
Taste after taste upheld with kindliest change;
Bestirs her then, and from each tender stalk
Whatever Earth, all-bearing mother, yields
In India, East or West, or middle shore
In Pontus, or the Punic coast, or where
Alcinous reign'd, fruit of all kinds, in coat
Rough or smooth rind, or bearded husk, or shell,
She gathers, tribute large, and on the board
Heaps with unsparing hand; for drink, the grape
She crushes, (inoffensive must!) and meaths
From many a berry, and from sweet kernels press'd

She tempers dulcet creams; nor these to hold
Wants her fit vessels pure; then strews the ground
With rose and odours from the shrub unfum'd.
  Meanwhile our primitive great sire, to meet
His god-like guest, walks forth, without more train
Accompanied, than with his own complete
Perfections; in himself was all his state,
More solemn than the tedious pomp that waits
On princes, when their rich retinue long
Of horses led, and grooms besmear'd with gold,
Dazzles the crowd, and sets them all agape.
Nearer his presence, Adam, tho' not aw'd,
Yet with submiss approach and reverence meek,
As to' a superior nature, bowing low,
Thus said: Native of Heav'n, for other place
None can than Heav'n such glorious shape contain;
Since by descending from the thrones above,
Those happy places, thou hast deign'd a while
To want, and honour these, vouchsafe with us
Two' only, who yet by sovereign gift possess
This spacious ground, in yonder shady bower
To rest, and what the garden choicest bears
To sit and taste, till this meridian heat
Be over, and the sun more cool decline.
  Whom thus th' angelic Virtue answer'd mild.
Adam, I therefore came; nor art thou such
Created, or such place hast here to dwell,
As may not oft invite, tho' Sp'rits of Heaven,
To visit thee; lead on then where thy bower
O'ershades, for these mid-hours, till ev'ning rise,
I have at will. So to the sylvan lodge
They came, that like Pomona's arbour smil'd
With flow'rets deck'd and fragrant smells; but Eve
Undeck'd, save with herself, more lovely fair
Than wood-nymph, or the fairest goddess feign'd
Of three that in mount Ida naked strove,
Stood to' entertain her guest from heav'n; no veil
She needed, virtue-proof; no thought infirm
Alter'd her cheek. On whom the Angel hail
Bestow'd, the holy salutation us'd
Long after to blest Mary, second Eve.
  Hail Mother of Mankind, whose fruitful womb

Shall fill the world more numerous with thy sons,
Than with these various fruits the trees of God
Have heap'd this table. Rais'd of grassy turf
Their table was, and mossy seats had round,
And on her ample square from side to side
All autumn pil'd, tho' spring and autumn here
Danc'd hand in hand. Awhile discourse they hold:
No fear lest dinner cool; when thus began
Our author. Heav'nly stranger, please to taste
These bounties, which our Nourisher, from whom
All perfect good, unmeasur'd out, descends,
To us for food and for delight hath caus'd
The earth to yield; unsavoury food, perhaps,
To spiritual natures; only this I know,
That one celestial Father gives to all.
  To whom the angel. Therefore what he gives
(Whose praise be ever sung) to Man in part
Spiritual, may of purest Sp'rits be found
No' ingrateful food: and food alike those pure
Intelligential substances require,
As doth your rational; and both contain
Within them every lower faculty
Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste,
Tasting concoct, digest, assimilate,
And corporeal to incopor'al turn.
For know, whatever was created, needs
To be sustain'd and fed; of elements
The grosser feeds the purer, earth the sea,
Earth and the sea feed air, the air those fires
Ethereal, and as lowest first the moon;
Whence in her visage round those spots unpurg'd
Vapours not yet into her substance turn'd.
Nor doth the moon no nourishment exhale
From her moist continent to higher orbs.
The sun, that light imparts to all receives
From all his alimental recompense
In humid exhalations, and at even
Sups with the ocean. Though in Heav'n the trees
Of life, ambrosial fruitage bear, and vines
Yield nectar; though from off the boughs each morn
We brush mellifluous dews, and find the ground
Covered with pearly grain: yet God hath here

Varied his bounty so with new delights,
As may compare with Heaven; and to taste
Think not I shall be nice. So down they sat,
And to their viands fell; nor seemingly
The Angel, nor in mist, the common gloss
Of Theologians; but with keen dispatch
Of real hunger, and concoctive heat
To transubstantiate: what redounds, transpires
Through Spirits with ease; nor wonder, if by fire
Of sooty coal th' empiric alchymist
Can turn, or holds it possible to turn,
Metals of drossiest ore to perfect gold
As from the mine. Meanwhile, at table, Eve
Minister'd naked, and their flowing cups
With pleasant liquors crown'd: O innocence
Deserving Paradise! if ever, then,
Then had the sons of God excuse to have been
Enamour'd at that sight; but in those hearts
Love unlibid'nous reign'd, nor jealousy
Was understood, the injur'd lover's hell.
  Thus when with meats and drinks they had suffic'd,
Not burden'd nature, sudden mind arose
In Adam, not to let th' occasion pass
Giv'n him by this great conference, to know
Of things above this world, and of their being
Who dwell in Heav'n, whose excellence he saw
Transcend his own so far, whose radiant forms,
Divine effulgence! whose high pow'r so far
Exceeded human, and his wary speech
Thus to th' empyreal minister he fram'd.
  Inhabitant with God, now know I well
Thy favour, in this honour done to man,
Under whose lowly roof thou hast vouchsaf'd
To enter, and these earthly fruits to taste;
Food not of Angels, yet accepted so,
As that more willingly thou couldst not seem
At Heav'n's high feasts to' have fed: yet what compare?
  To whom the winged Hierarch reply'd.
O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return,
If not deprav'd from good; created all
Such to perfection, one first matter all,

Endued with various forms, various degrees
Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
But more refin'd, more spiritous, and pure,
As nearer to him plac'd, or nearer tending
Each in their several active spheres assign'd,
Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
Proportion'd to each kind. So from the root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More airy, last the bright consummate flower
Spirits odorous breathes: flow'rs and their fruit,
Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublim'd,
To vital spirits aspire, to animal,
To intellectual; give both life and sense,
Fancy and understanding; whence the soul
Reason receives, and reason is her being,
Discursive, or intuitive; discourse
Is oftest yours, the latter most is ours;
Differing but in degree, of kind the same.
Wonder not then, what God for you saw good
If I refuse not, but convert, as you,
To proper substance: time may come, when Men
With Angels may participate, and find
No inconvenient diet, nor too light fare;
And from these corporal nutriments perhaps
Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit,
Improv'd by tract of time, and wing'd ascend
Ethereal, as we, or may at choice
Here or in heav'nly Paradises dwell,
If ye be found obedient, and retain
Unalterably firm his love entire,
Whose progeny you are. Meanwhile enjoy
Your fill what happiness this happy state
Can comprehend, incapable of more.
  To whom the patriarch of mankind reply'd.
O favourable Spirit, propitious guest,
Well hast thou taught the way that might direct
Our knowledge, and the scale of nature set
From centre to circumference, whereon
In contemplation of created things
By steps we may ascend to God. But say,
What meant that caution join'd, If ye be found
Obedient? can we want obedience then

To him, or possibly his love desert,
Who form'd us from the dust, and plac'd us here
Full to the utmost measure of what bliss
Human desires can seek or apprehend?
  To whom the Angel. Son of Heav'n and Earth,
Attend: That thou art happy, owe to God;
That thou continuest such, owe to thyself,
That is, to thy obedience; therein stand.
This was that caution giv'n thee; be advis'd.
God made thee perfect, not immutable;
And good he made thee, but to persevere
He left it in thy pow'r; ordain'd thy will
By nature free, not over-rul'd by fate
Inextricable, or strict necessity:
Our voluntary service he requires,
Not our necessitated; such with him
Finds no acceptance, nor can find; for how
Can hearts, not free, be try'd whether they serve
Willing or no, who will but what they must
By destiny, and can no other choose?
Myself and all th' angelic host, that stand
In sight of God enthron'd, our happy state
Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds:
On other surety none; freely we serve,
Because we freely love, as in our will
To love or not; in this we stand or fall:
And some are fall'n, to disobedience fall'n,
And so from Heav'n to deepest Hell; O fall
From what high state of bliss into what woe!
  To whom our great progenitor. Thy words
Attentive, and with more delighted ear,
Divine instructor, I have heard, than when
Cherubic songs by night from neighb'ring hills
Aereal music send: nor knew I not
To be both will and deed created free;
Yet that we never shall forget to love
Our Maker, and obey him whose command
Single is yet so just, my constant thoughts
Assur'd me, and still assure: though what thou tell'st
Hath pass'd in Heav'n, some doubt within me move,
But more desire to hear (if thou consent)
The full relation, which must needs be strange,
Worthy of sacred silence to be heard;

And we have yet large day, for scarce the sun
Hath finish'd half his journey, and scarce begins
His other half in the great zone of Heav'n.
  Thus Adam made request; and Raphael
After short pause assenting, thus began.
  High matter thou enjoin'st me, O prime of men,
Sad task and hard; for how shall I relate
To human sense th' invisible exploits
Of warring Spirits? how without remorse
The ruin of so many, glorious once,
And perfect while they stood? how last unfold
The secrets of another world, perhaps
Not lawful to reveal? yet for thy good
This is dispens'd; and what surmounts the reach
Of human sense, I shall delineate so,
By likening spiritual to corporeal forms,
As may express them best; though what if Earth
Be but the shadow of Heav'n, and things therein
Each t'other like, more than on earth is thought?
  As yet this world was not, and Chaos wild
Reign'd where these Heav'ns now roll, where Earth now rests
Upon her centre pois'd; when on a day
(For time, though in eternity, apply'd
To motion, measures all things durable
By present, past, and future) on such day
As Heav'n's great year brings forth, the empyreal host
Of Angels, by imperial summons call'd
Innumerable before th' Almighty's throne,
Forthwith from all the ends of Heav'n appear'd
Under the hierarchs in orders bright:
Ten thousand thousand ensigns high advanc'd,
Standards and gonfalons 'twixt van and rear
Stream in the air, and for distinction serve
Of hierarchies, of orders, and degrees;
Or in their glittering tissues bear imblaz'd
Holy memorials, acts of zeal and love
Recorded eminent. Thus when in orbs
Of circuit inexpressible they stood,
Orb within orb, the Father infinite,
By whom in bliss embosom'd sat the Son,
Amidst as from a flaming mount, whose top
Brightness had made invisible, thus spake.

Hear all ye Angels, progeny of light,
Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,
Hear my decree, which unrevok'd shall stand.
This day I have begot whom I declare
My only Son, and on this holy hill
Him have anointed, whom ye now behold
At my right hand; your head I him appoint;
And by myself have sworn to him shall bow
All knees in Heav'n, and shall confess him Lord;
Under his great vice-gerent reign abide
United as one individual soul
For ever happy: Him who disobeys,
Me disobeys, breaks union, and that day,
Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls
Into utter darkness, deep ingulf'd, his place
Ordain'd without redemption, without end.
So spake th' Omnipotent, and with his words
All seem'd well pleas'd; all seem'd, but were not all.
That day, as other solemn days, they spent
In song and dance about the sacred hill;
Mystical dance, which yonder starry sphere
Of planets, and of fix'd, in all her wheels
Resembles nearest; mazes intricate,
Eccentric, intervolv'd, yet regular
Then most, when most irregular they seem;
And in their motions harmony divine
So smooths her charming tones, that God's own ear
Listens delighted. Evening now approach'd
(For we have also our evening and our morn,
We ours for change delectable, not need)
Forthwith from dance to sweet repast they turn
Desirous; all in circles as they stood,
Tables are set, and on a sudden pil'd
With angels' food, and rubied nectar flows
In pearl, in diamond, and massy gold,
Fruit of delicious vines, the growth of Heaven.
On flow'rs repos'd, and with fresh flow'rets crown'd,
They eat, they drink, and in communion sweet
Quaff immortality and joy, secure
Of surfeit where full measure only bounds
Excess, before th' all-bounteous King, who show'r'd
With copious hand, rejoicing in their joy.

Now when ambrosial night, with clouds exhal'd
From that high mount of God, whence light and shade
Spring both, the face of brightest Heav'n had chang'd
To grateful twilight (for night comes not there
In darker veil) and roseat dews dispos'd
All but th' unsleeping eyes of God to rest;
Wide over all the plain, and wider far,
Than all this globous earth in plain outspread,
(Such are the courts of God) th' angelic throng,
Dispers'd in bands and files, their camp extend
By living streams among the trees of life,
Pavilions numberless! and sudden rear'd,
Celestial tabernacles, where they slept
Fann'd with cool winds; save those who in their course
Melodious hymns about the sov'ran throne
Alternate all night long: but not so wak'd
Satan; so call him now, his former name
Is heard no more in Heav'n; he of the first,
If not the first Arch-Angel, great in power,
In favour and pre-eminence, yet fraught
With envy against the Son of God, that day
Honour'd by his great Father, and proclaim'd
Messiah, King anointed, could not bear
Through pride that sight, and thought himself impair'd.
Deep malice thence conceiving and disdain,
Soon as midnight brought on the dusky hour
Friendliest to sleep and silence, he resolv'd
With all his legions to dislodge, and leave
Unworshipt, unobey'd, the throne supreme
Contemptuous, and his next subordinate
Awak'ning, thus to him in secret spake.
  Sleep'st thou, companion dear! what sleep can close
Thy eye lids? and remember'st what decree
Of yesterday, so late hath pass'd the lips
Of Heav'n's Almighty. Thou to me thy thoughts
Was wont, I mine to thee was wont to impart;
Both waking we were one; how then can now
Thy sleep dissent? New laws thou seest impos'd;
New laws from him who reigns, new minds may raise
In us who serve, new counsels, to debate
What doubtful may ensue: more in this place
To utter is not safe. Assemble thou

Of all those myriads which we lead the chief;
Tell them that by command, ere yet dim night
Her shadowy cloud withdraws, I am to haste,
And all who under me their banners wave
Homeward with flying march where we possess
The quarters of the north; there to prepare
Fit entertainment to receive our king,
The great Messiah, and his new commands,
Who speedily through all the hierarchies
Intends to pass triumphant, and give laws.
So spake the false Arch-angel, and infus'd
Bad influence into th' unwary breast
Of his associate: he together calls,
Or several, one by one, the regent Powers,
Under him regent; tells, as he was taught,
That the most High commanding, now e'er night,
Now e'er dim night had disincumber'd Heaven,
The great hierarchal standard was to move;
Tells the suggested cause, and casts between
Ambiguous words and jealousies, to sound
Or taint integrity: but all obey'd
The wonted signal, and superior voice
Of their great potentate; for great indeed
His name, and high was his decree in Heaven;
His count'nance, as the morning star that guides
The starry flock, allur'd them, and with lies
Drew after him the third part of Heav'n's host.
Meanwhile th' eternal eye, whose sight discerns
Abstrusest thoughts, from forth his holy mount
And from within the golden lamps that burn
Nightly before him, saw without their light
Rebellion rising, saw in whom, how spread
Among the sons of morn, what multitudes
Were banded to oppose his high decree;
And smiling to his only Son, thus said:
Son, thou in whom my glory I behold
In full resplendence, heir of all my might,
Nearly it now concerns us to be sure
Of our omnipotence, and with what arms
We mean to hold what anciently we claim
Of deity or empire; such a foe
Is rising, who intends to erect his throne

Equal to ours, throughout the spacious north;
Nor so content, hath in his thought to try
In battle, what our pow'r is, or our right.
Let us advise, and to this hazard draw
With speed what force is left, and all employ
In our defence, lest unawares we lose
This our high place, our sanctuary, our hill.
  To whom the Son with calm aspect and clear,
Light'ning divine, ineffable, serene,
Made answer. Mighty Father, thou thy foes
Justly hast in derision, and secure
Laugh'st at their vain designs and tumults vain:
Matter to me of glory, whom their hate
Illustrates, when they see all regal power
Giv'n to me to quell their pride, and in event
Know whether I be dextrous to subdue
Thy rebels, or be found the worst in Heaven.
  So spake the Son; but Satan with his powers
Far was advanc'd, on winged speed, an host
Innumerable as the stars of night,
Or stars of morning, dew-drops, which the sun
Impearls on every leaf and every flower.
Regions they pass'd, the mighty regencies
Of Seraphim, and Potentates, and Thrones
In their triple degrees; regions to which
All thy dominion, Adam, is no more
Than what this garden is to all the earth,
And all the sea, from one entire globose
Stretch'd into longitude; which having pass'd,
At length into the limits of the north
They came, and Satan to his royal seat
High on a hill, far blazing, as a mount
Rais'd on a mount, with pyramids and towers
From diamond quarries hewn, and rocks of gold;
The palace of great Lucifer, (so call
That structure in the dialect of men
Interpreted) which not long after, he,
Affecting all equality with God,
In imitation of that mount whereon
Messiah was declared in sight of Heaven,
The Mountain of the congregation call'd;
For thither he assembled all his train,

Pretending, so commanded, to consult
About the great reception of their king,
Thither to come; and with calumnious art
Of counterfeited truth thus held their ears.
  Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers,
If these magnific titles yet remain
Not merely titular, since by decree
Another now hath to himself ingross'd
All pow'r, and us eclips'd under the name
Of King anointed, for whom all this haste
Of midnight march, and hurried meeting here,
This only to consult, how we may best,
With what may be devis'd of honours new,
Receive him, coming to receive from us
Knee-tribute yet unpaid, prostration vile,
Too much to one! but double, how endur'd!
To one, and to his image now proclaim'd!
But what if better counsels might erect
Our minds, and teach us to cast off this yoke?
Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend
The supple knee? ye will not, if I trust
To know ye right, or if ye know yourselves
Natives and sons of Heav'n, possess'd before
By none, and if not equal all, yet free,
Equally free; for orders and degrees
Jar not with liberty, but well consist.
Who can in reason then, or right, assume
Monarchy over such as live by right
His equals; if in pow'r and splendour less,
In freedom equal? or can introduce
Law and edict on us, who without law
Err not; much less for this to be our Lord,
And look for adoration to th' abuse
Of those imperial titles, which assert
Our being ordain'd to govern, not to serve!
  Thus far his bold discourse without controul
Had audience, when among the Seraphim
Abdiel, than whom none with more zeal ador'd
The Deity, and divine commands obey'd,
Stood up, and in a flame of zeal severe
The current of his fury thus oppos'd.
  O argument blasphemous, false and proud!

Words which no ear ever to hear in Heav'n
Expected, least of all from thee, ingrate!
In place thyself so high above thy peers.
Canst thou with impious obloquy condemn
The just decree of God, pronounc'd and sworn,
That to his only Son by right endued
With regal sceptre, every soul in Heav'n
Shall bend the knee, and in that honour due
Confess him rightful king? unjust, thou say'st,
Flatly unjust, to bind with laws the free,
And, equal over equals, to let reign,
One over all with unsucceeded power.
Shalt thou give law to God, shalt thou dispute
With him the points of liberty, who made
Thee what thou art, and form'd the Power's of Heav'n
Such as he pleas'd, and circumscrib'd their being?
Yet, by experience taught, we know how good,
And of our good and of our dignity
How provident he is, how far from thought
To make us less, bent rather to exalt
Our happy state, under one head more near
United. But to grant it thee unjust,
That equal over equals monarchs reign:
Thyself, though great and glorious, dost thou count,
Or all angelic nature join'd in one,
Equal to him begotten Son? by whom,
As by his word the mighty Father made
All things, ev'n thee; and all the Spirits of Heaven,
By him created in their bright degrees,
Crown'd them with glory, and to their glory nam'd
Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers;
Essential pow'rs! nor by his reign obscur'd,
But more illustrious made; since he the head
One of our number thus reduc'd becomes;
His laws our laws; all honour to him done
Returns our own. Cease then this impious rage,
And tempt not these; but hasten to appease
Th' incensed Father, and th' incensed Son,
While pardon may be found in time besought.
  So spake the fervent Angel; but his zeal
None seconded, as out of season judg'd,
Or singular and rash; whereat rejoic'd

Th' Apostate, and more haughty thus reply'd :
That we were form'd then, say'st thou ? and the work
Of secondary hands, by task transferr'd
From Father to his Son ? strange point and new !
Doctrine which we would know whence learn'd: who saw
When this creation was ? remember'st thou
Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being ?
We know no time when we were not as now;
Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd
By our own quick'ning pow'r, when fatal course
Had circl'd his full orb, the birth mature
Of this our native Heav'n, ethereal sons.
Our puissance is our own ; our own right hand
Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try
Who is our equal : then thou shalt behold
Whether by supplication we intend
Address, and to begirt th' Almighty throne
Beseeching or besieging. This report,
These tidings, carry to th' anointed King ;
And fly, e'er evil intercept thy flight.
He said ; and, as the sound of waters deep,
Hoarse murmur echo'd to his words applause
Through the infinite host ; nor less for that
The flaming Seraph fearless, though alone
Incompass'd round with foes, thus answer'd bold.
O alienate from God, O Spirit accurs'd,
Forsaken of all good ! I see thy fall
Determin'd, and thy hapless crew involv'd
In this perfidious fraud, contagion spread
Both of thy crime and punishment : henceforth
No more be troubled how to quit the yoke
Of God's Messiah ; those indulgent laws
Will not be now vouchsaf'd ; other decrees
Against thee are gone forth without recall ;
That golden sceptre, which thou didst reject,
Is now an iron rod to bruise and break
Thy disobedience. Well thou didst advise,
Yet not for thy advice or threats I fly
These wicked tents devoted, lest the wrath
Impendent, raging into sudden flame
Distinguish not : for soon expect to feel
His thunder on thy head, devouring fire.

Then, who created thee, lamenting learn,
When who can uncreate thee thou shalt know.
  So spake the Seraph Abdiel, faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only he;
Among innumerable false, unmov'd,
Unshaken, unseduc'd, unterrify'd,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
Though single. From amidst them forth he pass'd,
Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustain'd
Superior, nor of violence fear'd aught;
And with retorted scorn his back he turn'd
On those proud tow'rs, to swift destruction doom'd.

BOOK VI.

THE ARGUMENT.

Raphael continues to relate how Michael and Gabriel were sent forth to battle against Satan and his angels. The first fight describ'd: Satan and his powers retire under night: he calls a council, invents devilish engines, which in the second day's fight put Michael and his angels to some disorder: but they at length, pulling up mountains, overwhelm'd both the force and machines of Satan: yet the tumult not so ending, God on the third day sends Messiah his Son, for whom he had reserv'd the glory of that victory: he in the power of his Father coming to the place, and causing all his legions to stand still on either side, with his chariot and thunder driving into the midst of his enemies, pursues them unable to resist, towards the wall of Heaven; which opening; they leap down with horror and confusion into the place of punishment prepar'd for them in the deep: Messiah returns with triumph to his Father.

All night the dreadless angel unpursued
Through Heav'n's wide champain held his way, till Morn,
Wak'd by the circling Hours, with rosy hand
Unbarr'd the gates of Light. There is a cave
Within the mount of God, fast by his throne,
Where light and darkness in perpetual round
Lodge and dislodge by turns, which makes through Heav'n
Grateful vicissitude, like day, and night:
Light issues forth, and at the other door

Obsequious Darkness enters, till her hour,
To veil the Heaven, though darkness there might well
Seem twilight here: and now went forth the Morn,
Such as in highest Heav'n, array'd in gold
Empyreal; from before her vanish'd Night,
Shot through with orient beams; when all the plain
Cover'd with thick embattl'd squadrons bright,
Chariots and flaming arms, and fiery steeds
Reflecting blaze on blaze, first met his view:
War he perceiv'd, war in procinct, and found
Already known what he for news had thought
To have reported: gladly then he mix'd
Among those friendly powers, who him receiv'd
With joy and acclamations loud, that one,
That of so many myriad's fall'n, yet one
Return'd not lost: on to the Sacred Hill
They led him high applauded, and present
Before the seat supreme; from whence a voice
From midst a golden cloud thus mild was heard:
  Servant of God, well done; well hast thou fought
The better fight, who single hast maintain'd
Against revolted multitudes the cause
Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms;
And for the testimony of truth hast borne
Universal reproach, far worse to bear
Than violence; for this was all thy care,
To stand approv'd in sight of God, though worlds
Judg'd thee perverse: the easier conquest now
Remains thee, aided by this host of friends,
Back on thy foes more glorious to return
Than scorn'd thou did'st depart, and to subdue
By force, who reason for their law refuse,
Right reason for their law, and for their king
Messiah, who by right of merit reigns.
Go, Michael, of celestial armies prince,
And thou in military prowess next,
Gabriel! lead forth to battle these my sons
Invincible! lead forth my armed saints
By thousands and by millions, rang'd for fight,
Equal in number to that godless crew,
Rebellious; them with fire and hostile arms
Fearless assault, and to the brow of Heav'n

Pursuing, drive them out from God and bliss
Into their place of punishment, the gulf
Of Tartarus which ready opens wide
His fiery chaos to receive their fall.
So spake the Sov'reign Voice, and clouds began
To darken all the hill, and smoke to roll
In dusky wreaths, reluctant flames, the sign
Of wrath awak'd; nor with less dread the loud
Ethereal trumpet from on high 'gan blow:
At which command the powers militant,
That stood for Heav'n, in mighty quadrate join'd
Of union irresistible, mov'd on
In silence their bright legions, to the sound
Of instrumental harmony, that breath'd
Heroic ardour to advent'rous deeds
Under their god-like leaders, in the cause
Of God and his Messiah. On they move,
Indissolubly firm; nor obvious hill,
Nor strait'ning vale, nor wood, nor stream, divides
Their perfect ranks; for high above the ground
Their march was, and the passive air upbore
Their nimble tread; as when the total kind
Of birds in orderly array on wing,
Came summon'd over Eden to receive
Their names of thee; so over many a tract
Of Heav'n they march'd, and many a province wide,
Tenfold the length of this terrene: at last
Far in th' horizon to the North appear'd
From skirt to skirt a fiery region, stretch'd
In battleous aspect, and nearer view
Bristled with upright beams innumerable
Of rigid spears, and helmets throng'd, and shields
Various, with boastful argument portray'd,
The banded powers of Satan, hasting on
With furious expedition; for they ween'd
That self-same day by fight, or by surprise,
To win the mount of God, and on his throne
To set the envier of his state, the proud
Aspirer; but their thoughts prov'd fond and vain
In the mid-way: though strange to us it seem'd
At first, that Angel should with Angel war,
And in fierce hosting meet, who wont to meet

So oft in festivals of joy and love
Unanimous, as sons of one great Sire
Hymning th' eternal father: but the shout
Of battle now began, and rushing sound
Of onset ended soon each milder thought.
High in the midst, exalted as a god,
Th' Apostate in his sun-bright chariot sat,
Idol of majesty divine, inclos'd
With flaming cherubim and golden shields;
Then lighted from his gorgeous throne, for now
'Twixt host and host but narrow space was left,
A dreadful interval! and front to front
Presented stood in terrible array
Of hideous length: before the cloudy van,
On the rough edge of battle e'er it join'd,
Satan with vast and haughty strides advanc'd,
Came tow'ring, arm'd in adamant and gold;
Abdiel that sight endur'd not, where he stood
Among the mightiest, bent on highest deeds;
And thus his own undaunted heart explores.
  O Heaven! that such resemblance of the Highest
Should yet remain, where faith and realty
Remain not: wherefore should not strength and might
There fail where virtue fails, or weakest prove
Where boldest, though to fight unconquerable?
His puissance, trusting in th' Almighty's aid,
I mean to try, whose reason I have try'd
Unsound and false; nor is it aught but just,
That he who in debate of truth hath won
Should win in arms, in both disputes alike
Victor; though brutish that contest and foul,
When Reason hath to deal with Force: yet so
Most reason is that Reason overcome.
  So pondering, and from his armed peers
Forth stepping opposite half way he met
His daring foe, at this prevention more
Incens'd, and thus securely him defy'd.
  Proud, art thou met? thy hope was to have reach'd
The height of thy aspiring, unoppos'd,
The throne of God unguarded, and his side
Abandon'd at the terror of thy power
Or potent tongue; fool, not to think how vain

Against th' Omnipotent to rise in arms;
Who out of smallest things could without end
Have rais'd incessant armies to defeat
Thy folly; or with solitary hand
Reaching beyond all limit, at one blow,
Unaided, could have finish'd thee, and whelm'd
Thy legions under darkness: but thou seest
All are not of thy train; there be who faith
Prefer, and piety to God, though then
To thee not visible, when I alone
Seem'd in thy world erroneous to dissent
From all: my sect thou seest; now learn, too late,
How few sometimes may know, when thousands err.
  Whom the grand foe, with scornful eye askance,
Thus answer'd. Ill for thee, but in wish'd hour
Of my revenge, first sought for, thou return'st
From flight, seditious angel, to receive
Thy merited reward, the first essay
Of this right hand provok'd, since first that tongue
Inspir'd with contradiction durst oppose
A third part of the gods, in synod met
Their deities to assert, who, while they feel
Vigour divine within them, can allow
Omnipotence to none. But well thou com'st
Before thy fellows, ambitious to win
From me some plume, that thy success may shew
Destruction to the rest: this pause between
(Unanswer'd lest thou boast) to let thee know;
At first I thought that Liberty and Heav'n
To heav'nly souls had been all one; but now
I see that most through sloth had rather serve,
Minist'ring spirits, train'd up in feast and song;
Such hast thou arm'd, the minstrelsy of Heav'n,
Servility with Freedom to contend,
As both their deeds compar'd this day shall prove.
  To whom in brief thus Abdiel stern reply'd:
Apostate, still thou err'st, nor end will find
Of erring, from the path of Truth remote:
Unjustly thou deprav'st it with the name
Of Servitude, to serve whom God ordains,
Or nature: God and nature bid the same,
When he who rules is worthiest, and excels

Them whom he governs. This is servitude,
To serve th' unwise, or him who hath rebell'd
Against his worthier, as thine now serve thee,
Thyself not free, but to thyself inthrall'd;
Yet lewdly dar'st our minist'ring upbraid.
Reign thou in Hell, thy kingdom; let me serve
In Heav'n, God ever blest, and his divine
Behests obey, worthiest to be obey'd;
Yet chains in Hell, not realms expect: meanwhile
From me return'd, as erst thou saidst, from flight,
This greeting on thy impious crest receive.
  So say'ing, a noble stroke he lifted high,
Which hung not, but so swift with tempest fell
On the proud crest of Satan, that no sight,
Nor motion of swift thought, less could his shield
Such ruin intercept: ten paces huge
He back recoil'd; the tenth on bended knee
His massy spear upstay'd; as if on earth
Winds under ground, or waters forcing way,
Sidelong had push'd a mountain from his seat
Half sunk with all his pines. Amazement seiz'd
The rebel thrones, but greater rage to see
Thus foil'd their mightiest: ours joy fill'd, and shout,
Presage of victory, and fierce desire
Of battle: whereat Michael bid sound
Th' arch-angel trumpet; through the vast of Heav'n
It sounded, and the faithful armies rung
Hosannah to the High'st: nor stood at gaze
The adverse legions, nor less hideous join'd
The horrid shock: now storming fury rose
And clamour, such as heard in Heav'n till now
Was never; arms on armour clashing bray'd
Horrible discord, and the madding wheels
Of brazen chariots rag'd; dire was the noise
Of conflict; over head the dismal hiss
Of fiery darts in flaming vollies flew,
And flying vaulted either host with fire.
So under fiery cope together rush'd
Both battles main, with ruinous assault
And inextinguishable rage; all Heav'n
Resounded, and had Earth been then, all Earth
Had to her centre shook. What wonder? when
Millions of fierce-encount'ring angels fought

On either side, the least of whom could wield
These elements, and arm him with the force
Of all their regions: how much more of power
Army against army numberless to raise,
Dreadful combustion warring, and disturb,
Though not destroy, their happy native seat;
Had not th' eternal King omnipotent
From his strong hold of Heav'n high over-rul'd,
And limited their might; though number'd such
As each divided legion might have seem'd
A numerous host; in strength each armed hand
A legion; led in fight, yet leader seem'd
Each warrior; single as in chief, expert
When to advance, or stand, or turn the sway
Of battle, open when, and when to close
The ridges of grim War: no thought of flight,
None of retreat, no unbecoming deed
That argued fear; each on himself rely'd,
As only in his arm the moment lay
Of victory; deeds of eternal fame
Were done, but infinite; for wide was spread
That war, and various, sometimes on firm ground
A standing fight, then soaring on main wing
Tormented all the air; all air seem'd then
Conflicting fire; long time in even scale
The battle hung; till Satan, who that day
Prodigious power had shewn, and met in arms
No equal, ranging through the dire attack
Of fighting seraphim, confus'd, at length
Saw where the sword of Michael smote, and fell'd
Squadrons at once; with huge two-handed sway
Brandish'd aloft the horrid edge came down
Wide wasting; such destruction to withstand
He hasted, and oppos'd the rocky orb
Of tenfold adamant, his ample shield,
A vast circumference: at his approach
The great arch-angel from his warlike toil
Surceas'd, and glad, as hoping here to end
Intestine war in Heav'n, th' Arch-foe subdu'd
Or captive dragg'd in chains, with hostile frown,
And visage all inflam'd first thus began:
  Author of evil, unknown till thy revolt,

Unnam'd in Heav'n, now plenteous, as thou seest
These acts of hateful strife, hateful to all,
Though heaviest by just measure on thyself
And thy adherents: how hast thou disturb'd
Heav'n's blessed peace, and into Nature brought
Misery, uncreated till the crime
Of thy rebellion! how hast thou instill'd
Thy malice into thousands, once upright
And faithful, now prov'd false! but think not here
To trouble holy rest: Heav'n casts thee out
From all her confines. Heav'n, the seat of bliss,
Brooks not the works of Violence and War.
Hence then, and evil go with thee along,
Thy offspring, to the place of evil, Hell;
Thou and thy wicked crew; there mingle broils,
E'er this avenging sword begin thy doom,
Or some more sudden vengeance, wing'd from God,
Precipitate thee with augmented pain.
  So spake the Prince of Angels; to whom thus
The adversary. Nor think thou with wind
Of airy threats to awe whom yet with deeds
Thou canst not. Hast thou turn'd the least of these
To flight? or if to fall, but that they rise
Unvanquish'd; easier to transact with me
That thou should'st hope, imperious! and with threats
To chase me hence? err not that so shall end
The strife which thou call'st Evil, but we style
The strife of Glory; which we mean to win,
Or turn this Heav'n itself into the Hell
Thou fablest; here however to dwell free,
If not to reign: meanwhile thy utmost force,
(And join him nam'd Almighty to thy aid,)
I fly not, but have sought thee far and nigh.
  They ended parle, and both address'd for fight
Unspeakable; for who though with the tongue
Of angels, can relate, or to what things
Liken on earth conspicuous, that may lift
Human imagination to such height
Of godlike power? for likest gods they seem'd,
Stood they or mov'd, in stature, motion, arms;
Fit to decide the empire of great Heav'n.
Now wav'd their fiery swords, and in the air

Made horrid circles; two broad suns their shields
Blaz'd opposite, while Expectation stood
In horror; from each hand with speed retir'd,
Where erst was thickest fight, th' angelic throng,
And left large field, unsafe within the wind
Of such commotion; such, as (to set forth
Great things by small) if Nature's concord broke,
Among the constellations war were sprung,
Two planets rushing from aspect malign
Of fiercest opposition in mid sky
Should combat, and their jarring spheres confound.
Together both with next to almighty arm
Uplifted imminent, one stroke they aim'd
That might determine, and not need repeat,
As not of power at once; nor odds appear'd
In might or swift prevention: but the sword
Of Michael, from the armoury of God,
Was giv'n him temper'd so, that neither keen
Nor solid might resist that edge: it met
The sword of Satan with steep force to smite
Descending, and in half cut sheer; nor staid,
But with swift wheel reverse, deep ent'ring, shar'd
All his right side: then Satan first knew pain,
And writh'd him to and fro convolv'd; so sore
The griding sword with discontinuous wound
Pass'd through him: but the ethereal substance clos'd,
Not long divisible; and from the gash
A stream of nect'rous humour issuing flow'd
Sanguine, such as celestial spirits may bleed,
And all his armour stain'd ere while so bright.
Forthwith on all sides to his aid was run
By angels many and strong, who interpos'd
Defence, while others bore him on their shields
Back to his chariot, where it stood retir'd
From off the files of war; there they him laid,
Gnashing for anguish, and despite and shame,
To find himself not matchless, and his pride
Humbled by such rebuke, so far beneath
His confidence to equal God in power.
Yet soon he heal'd; for sp'rits that live throughout
Vital in every part, not as frail man
In entrails, heart or head, liver or reins,
Cannot but by annihilating die;

Nor in their liquid texture mortal wound
Receive; no more than can the fluid air:
All heart they live, all head, all eye, all ear,
All intellect, all sense; and as they please,
They limb themselves, and colour, shape and size
Assume, as likes them best, condense or rare.
  Meanwhile in other parts like deeds deserv'd
Memorial, where the might of Gabriel fought,
And with fierce ensigns pierc'd the deep array
Of Moloch, furious king; who him defy'd,
And at his chariot wheels to drag him bound
Threaten'd, nor from the Holy One of Heav'n
Refrain'd his tongue blasphemous: but anon
Down clov'n to the waist, with shatter'd arms
And uncouth pain fled bellowing. On each wing
Uriel and Raphael his vaunting foe,
Though huge, and in a rock of diamond arm'd,
Vanquish'd Adramelech and Asmadia,
Two potent thrones, that to be less than gods
Disdain'd, but meaner thoughts learn'd in their flight,
Mangled with ghastly wounds through plate and mail.
Nor stood unmindful Abdiel to annoy
The atheist crew, but with redoubled blow
Ariel and Arioch, and the violence
Of Ramiel scorch'd and blasted overthrew.
I might relate of thousands, and their names
Eternize here on earth; but those elect
Angels, contented with their fame in Heav'n,
Seek not the praise of men: the other sort,
In might though wondrous, and in acts of war,
Nor of renown less eager, yet by doom
Cancel'd from Heav'n and sacred memory,
Nameless in dark oblivion let them dwell.
For strength from truth divided, and from just,
Illaudable, nought merits but dispraise
And ignominy; yet to glory aspires
Vain-glorious, and through infamy seeks fame:
Therefore eternal silence be their doom.
  And now their mightiest quell'd, the battle swerv'd,
With many an inroad gor'd; deformed rout
Enter'd, and foul disorder; all the ground
With shiver'd armour strown, and on a heap

Chariot and charioteer lay overturn'd,
And fiery foaming steeds: what stood recoil'd
O'erwearied, though the faint Satanic host
Defensive scarce, or with pale fear surpris'd,
Then first with fear surpris'd and sense of pain,
Fled ignominious, to such evil brought
By sin of disobedience, till that hour
Not liable to fear, or flight, or pain.
Far otherwise th' inviolable saints
In cubic phalanx firm advanc'd entire,
Invulnerable, impenetrably arm'd;
Such high advantages their innocence
Gave them above their foes; not to have sinn'd,
Not to have disobey'd; in fight they stood
Unwearied, unobnoxious to be pain'd
By wound, though from their place by violence mov'd.
  Now Night her course began, and over Heav'n
Inducing darkness, grateful truce impos'd,
And silence on the odious din of War:
Under her cloudy covert both retir'd,
Victor and vanquish'd: on the foughten field
Michael and his angels prevalent
Encamping, plac'd in guard their watches round,
Cherubic waving fires: on th' other part
Satan, with his rebellious disappear'd,
Far in the dark dislodg'd: and void of rest,
His Potentates to council call'd by night;
And in the midst thus undismay'd began:
  O! now in danger try'd, now known in arms
Not to be overpower'd, Companions dear,
Found worthy not of liberty alone,
Too mean pretence, but what we more affect,
Honour, dominion, glory and renown;
Who have sustain'd one day in doubtful fight
(And if one day, why not eternal days?)
What Heaven's Lord had powerfullest to send
Against us from about his throne, and judg'd
Sufficient to subdue us to his will,
But proves not so; then fallible, it seems,
Of future we may deem him, though till now
Omniscient thought. True is, less firmly arm'd,
Some disadvantage we endur'd and pain,

Till now not known, but known, as soon contemn'd;
Since now we find this our empyreal form
Incapable of mortal injury,
Imperishable; and though pierc'd with wound,
Soon closing, and by native vigour heal'd,
Of evil then so small as easy think
The remedy; perhaps more valid arms,
Weapons more violent, when next we meet,
May serve to better us, and worse our foes:
Or equal what between us made the odds,
In nature none: if other hidden cause
Left them superior, while we can preserve
Unhurt our minds and understanding sound,
Due search and consultation will disclose.
  He sat; and in th' assembly next upstood
Nisroch, of principalities the prime;
As one he stood escap'd from cruel fight,
Sore toil'd, his riven arms to havoc hewn,
And cloudy in aspect thus answ'ring spake:
  Deliverer from new lords, leader to free
Enjoyment of our right as gods; yet hard
For gods, and too unequal work we find,
Against unequal arms to fight in pain,
Against unpain'd, impassive; from which evil
Ruin must needs ensue; for what avails
Valour or strength, though matchless, quell'd with pain
Which all subdues, and makes remiss the hands
Of mightiest? Sense of pleasure we may well
Spare out of life perhaps, and not repine,
But live content, which is the calmest life:
But pain is perfect misery, the worst
Of evils, and excessive, overturns
All patience. He who therefore can invent
With what more forcible we may offend
Our yet unwounded enemies, or arm
Ourselves with like defence, to me deserves
No less than for deliverance what we owe.
  Whereto, with look compos'd, Satan reply'd:
Not uninvented that, which thou aright
Believ'st so main to our success, I bring.
Which of us who beholds the bright surface
Of this ethereous mould whereon we stand,

This continent of spacious Heav'n, adorn'd
With plant, fruit, flow'r ambrosial, gems and gold;
Whose eye so superficially surveys
These things, as not to mind from whence they grow
Deep under ground, materials dark and crude,
Of spiritous and fiery spume, till touch'd
With Heav'n's ray, and temper'd, they shoot forth
So beauteous, op'ning to the ambient light?
These, in their dark nativity, the deep
Shall yield us, pregnant with infernal flame;
Which into hollow engines long and round
Thick ramm'd, at th' other bore with touch of fire
Dilated, and infuriate, shall send forth
From far, with thund'ring noise, among our foes
Such implements of mischief, as shall dash
To pieces, and o'erwhelm whatever stands
Adverse, that they shall fear we have disarm'd
The thund'rer of his only dreaded bolt.
Nor long shall be our labour; yet ere dawn,
Effect shall end our wish. Meanwhile revive;
Abandon fear; to strength and counsel join'd
Think nothing hard, much less to be despair'd.
  He ended; and his words their drooping cheer
Enlighten'd, and their languish'd hope reviv'd.
Th' invention all admir'd, and each, how he
To be th' inventor miss'd; so easy' it seem'd
Once found, which yet unfound, most would have [thought
Impossible: yet haply of thy race
In future days, if malice should abound,
Some one intent on mischief, or inspir'd
With devilish machination, might devise
Like instrument to plague the sons of men
For sin, on war and mutual slaughter bent.
Forthwith from council to the work they flew;
None arguing stood: innumerable hands
Were ready; in a moment up they turn'd
Wide the celestial soil, and saw beneath
Th' originals of Nature in their crude
Conception; sulphurous and nitrous foam
They found, they mingled; and with subtile art,
Concocted and adusted, they reduc'd
To blackest grain, and into store convey'd:
Part hidden veins digg'd up (nor hath this earth

Entrails unlike) of mineral and stone,
Whereof to found their engines and their balls
Of missive ruin; part incentive reed
Provide, pernicious with one touch of fire.
So all ere day-spring, under conscious Night,
Secret they finish'd, and in order set,
With silent circumspection, unespy'd.
  Now, when fair morn orient in Heav'n appear'd,
Up rose the victor Angels, and to arms
The matin trumpet sung: in arms they stood
Of golden panoply, refulgent host!
Soon banded: others from the dawning hills
Look'd round, and scouts each coast light-armed scour
Each quarter, to descry the distant foe,
Where lodg'd, or whither fled, or if for fight,
In motion or in halt: him soon they met,
Under spread ensigns, moving nigh, in slow,
But firm battalion; back with speediest sail
Zophiel, of Cherubim the swiftest wing,
Came flying, and, in mid air, aloud thus cry'd:
  Arm, Warriors, arm for fight; the foe at hand,
Whom fled we thought, will save us long pursuit
This day; fear not his flight; so thick a cloud
He comes, and settled in his face I see
Sad resolution, and secure: let each
His adamantine coat gird well, and each
Fit well his helm, gripe fast his orbed shield,
Borne ev'n or high; for this day will pour down,
If I conjecture aught, no drizzling shower,
But rattling storm of arrows barb'd with fire.
  So warn'd he them, aware themselves, and soon
In order, quit of all impediment,
Instant, without disturb, they took alarm,
And onward move embattl'd; when, behold
Not distant far, with heavy pace, the foe
Approaching gross and huge, in hollow cube,
Training his devilish engin'ry, impal'd
On every side with shadowing squadrons deep,
To hide the fraud. At interview both stood
Awhile; but suddenly at head appear'd
Satan; and thus was heard commanding loud:
  Vanguard, to right and left, the front unfold;

That all may see, who hate us, how we seek
Peace and composure, and, with open breast,
Stand ready to receive them, if they like
Our overture, and turn not back perverse;
But that I doubt; however, witness Heav'n,
Heav'n, witness thou anon, while we discharge
Freely our part; ye who appointed, stand,
Do as you have in charge, and briefly touch
What we propound, and loud, that all may hear.
  So scoffing, in ambiguous words, he scarce
Had ended; when, to right and left, the front
Divided, and to either flank retir'd:
Which to our eyes discover'd, new and strange,
A triple mounted row of pillars laid
On wheels (for like to pillars most they seem'd,
Or hollow'd bodies made of oak or fir,
With branches lopt in wood or mountain fell'd)
Brass, iron, stony mould, had not their mouths,
With hideous orifice, gap'd on us wide,
Portending hollow truce: at each behind
A Seraph stood, and in his hand a reed
Stood waving, tipt with fire; while we suspense
Collected stood, within our thoughts amus'd,
Not long; for sudden all at once their reeds
Put forth, and to a narrow vent apply'd,
With nicest touch. Immediate in a flame,
But soon obscur'd with smoke, all Heav'n appear'd,
From those deep-throated engines belch'd, whose roar
Embowel'd with outrageous noise the air,
And all her entrails tore, disgorging foul
Their devilish glut, chain'd thunderbolts and hail
Of iron globes; which on the victor host
Levell'd with such impetuous fury smote,
That whom they hit, none on their feet might stand,
Tho' standing else as rocks, but down they fell
By thousands, angel on arch-angel roll'd;
The sooner for their arms; unarm'd they might
Have easily as sp'rits evaded swift
By quick contraction, or remove; but now
Foul dissipation follow'd, and forc'd rout;
Nor serv'd it to relax their serried files.
What should they do? If on they rush'd, repulse
Repeated, and indecent overthrow

Doubled, would render them yet more despis'd,
And to their foes a laughter; for in view
Stood rank'd of seraphim another row,
In posture to displode their second tire
Of thunder; back defeated to return
They worse abhorr'd. Satan beheld their plight,
And to his mates thus in derision call'd:
  O Friends, why come not on these victors proud?
Erewhile they fierce were coming; and when we
To entertain them fair with open front
And breast (what could we more?) propounded terms
Of composition, straight they chang'd their minds,
Flew off, and into strange vagaries fell,
As they would dance; yet for a dance they seem'd
Somewhat extravagant and wild: perhaps
For joy of offer'd peace: but I suppose,
If our proposals once again were heard,
We should compel them to a quick result.
  To whom thus Belial, in like gamesome mood:
Leader, the terms we sent were terms of weight,
Of hard contents, and full of force urg'd home,
Such as we might perceive amused them all,
And stumbled many; who receives them right,
Had need from head to foot well understand;
Not understood, this gift they have besides,
They shew us when our foes walk not upright.
  So they among themselves, in pleasant vein,
Stood scoffing, heighten'd in their thoughts beyond
All doubt of victory: Eternal might
To match with their inventions they presum'd
So easy', and of his thunder made a scorn,
And all his host derided, while they stood
Awhile in trouble; but they stood not long;
Rage prompted them at length, and found them arms
Against such hellish mischief fit t' oppose.
Forthwith (behold the excellence, the power,
Which God hath in his mighty angels plac'd)
Their arms away they threw, and to the hills
(For Earth hath this variety from Heav'n
Of pleasure situate in hill and dale)
Light as the lightning glimpse they ran, they flew;
From their foundations loos'ning to and fro':

They pluck'd the seated hills, with all their load,
Rocks, waters, woods, and by their shaggy tops,
Uplifting bore them in their hands: amaze,
Be sure, and terror, seiz'd the rebel host,
When coming towards them so dread they saw
The bottom of the mountains upward turn'd;
Till on those cursed engines' triple row
They saw them whelm'd, and all their confidence
Under the weight of mountains buried deep;
Themselves invaded next, and on their heads
Main promontories flung, which in the air
Came shadowing, and oppress'd whole legions arm'd;
Their armour help'd their harm, crush'd in and bruis'd
Into their substance pent, which wrought them pain
Implacable, and many a dolorous groan;
Long struggling underneath, ere they could wind
Out of such pris'n, tho' Sp'rits of purest light;
Purest at first, now gross by sinning grown.
The rest in imitation to like arms
Betook them, and the neighb'ring hills uptore;
So hills, amid the air, encounter'd hills,
Hurl'd to and fro with jaculation dire,
That under ground they fought in dismal shade;
Infernal noise; war seem'd a civil game
To this uproar; horrid confusion heap'd
Upon confusion rose: and now all Heav'n
Had gone to wreck, with ruin overspread,
Had not th' Almighty Father, where he sits
Shrin'd in his sanctuary of Heav'n secure,
Consulting on the sum of things, foreseen
This tumult, and permitted all, advis'd:
That his great purpose he might so fulfil,
To honour his anointed Son, aveng'd
Upon his enemies, and to declare
All power on him transferr'd: whence to his Son,
Th' assessor of his throne, he thus began:
  Effulgence of my glory, Son belov'd,
Son, in whose face invisible is beheld
Visibly, what by deity I am,
And in whose hand what by decree I do,
Second Omnipotence, two days are past,
(Two days, as we compute the days of Heav'n,)

Since Michael and his powers went forth to tame
These disobedient: sore hath been their fight,
As likeliest was, when two such foes met arm'd;
For to themselves I left them, and thou know'st,
Equal in their creation they were form'd,
Save what sin hath impair'd, which yet hath wrought
Insensibly; for I suspend their doom;
Whence in perpetual fight they needs must last
Endless, and no solution will be found:
War wearied hath perform'd what war can do,
And to disorder'd rage let loose the reins,
With mountains as with weapons arm'd, which makes
Wild work in Heav'n, and dangerous to the main.
Two days are therefore past; the third is thine;
For thee I have ordain'd it, and thus far
Have suffer'd, that the glory may be thine
Of ending this great war, since none but thou
Can end it. Into thee such virtue and grace
Immense I have transfus'd, that all may know
In Heav'n and Hell thy power above compare;
And this perverse commotion govern'd thus,
To manifest thee worthiest to be Heir
Of all things; to be Heir and to be King
By sacred unction, thy deserved right.
Go then, thou Mightiest, in thy Father's might,
Ascend my chariot, guide the rapid wheels
That shake Heav'n's basis, bring forth all my war,
My bow and thunder, my Almighty arms
Gird on, and sword upon thy puissant thigh.
Pursue these sons of darkness, drive them out
From all Heav'n's bounds into the utter deep:
There let them learn, as likes them, to despise
God, and Messiah, his anointed King.
He said, and on his Son with rays direct
Shone full; he all his Father full express'd
Ineffably into his face receiv'd;
And thus the filial Godhead answ'ring spake:
O Father, O Supreme of heav'nly thrones!
First, Highest, Holiest, Best, thou always seek'st
To glorify thy son, I always thee,
As is most just; this I my glory account,

My exaltation, and my whole delight,
That thou in me well pleas'd, declar'st thy will
Fulfill'd, which to fulfil is all my bliss.
Sceptre, and power, thy giving, I assume;
And gladlier shall resign, when, in the end,
Thou shalt be all and all, and I in thee
For ever; and in me all whom thou lov'st:
But whom thou hat'st, I hate, and can put on
Thy terrors, as I put thy mildness on,
Image of thee in all things; and shall soon,
Arm'd with thy might, rid Heav'n of these rebell'd;
To their prepar'd ill mansion driven down,
To chains of darkness, and the undying worm:
That from thy just obedience could revolt,
Whom to obey is happiness entire.
Then shall thy saints unmix'd, and from th' impure
Far separate, circling thy holy Mount
Unfeigned hallelujahs to thee sing,
Hymns of high praise, and I among them chief.
  So said, he o'er his sceptre bowing, rose
From the right hand of Glory where he sat;
And the third sacred morn began to shine,
Dawning through Heav'n: forth rush'd with whirlwind sound
The chariot of paternal Deity,
Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel undrawn,
Itself instinct with spirit, but convoy'd
By four cherubic shapes; four faces each
Had wond'rous; as with stars their bodies all
And wings were set with eyes, with eyes the wheels
Of beryl, and careering fires between;
Over their heads a crystal firmament,
Where a sapphire throne, inlaid with pure
Amber, and colours of the show'ry arch.
He in celestial panoply all arm'd
Of radiant Urim, work divinely wrought,
Ascended; at his right hand Victory
Sat eagle-wing'd; beside him hung his bow
And quiver, with three-bolted thunder stor'd,
And from about him fierce effusion roll'd
Of smoke, and bickering flame, and sparkles dire:

Attended with ten thousand thousand saints,
He onward came; far off his coming shone;
And twenty thousand (I their number heard)
Chariots of God, half on each hand were seen:
He on the wings of Cherub rode sublime
On the crystalline sky, in sapphire thron'd,
Illustrious far and wide, but by his own
First seen; them unexpected joy surpris'd,
When the great ensign of Messiah blaz'd,
Aloft by angels borne, his sign in Heav'n;
Under whose conduct Michael soon reduc'd
His army, circumfus'd on either wing,
Under their head embodied all in one.
Before him Power divine his way prepar'd;
At his command th' uprooted hills retir'd
Each to his place; they heard his voice, and went
Obsequious; Heav'n his wonted face renew'd,
And with fresh flow'rets hill and valley smil'd.
This saw his hapless foes, but stood obdur'd,
And to rebellious fight rallied their powers
Insensate, hope conceiving from despair.
In heav'nly sp'rits could such perverseness dwell?
But to convince the proud what signs avail,
Or wonders move th' obdurate to relent,
They harden'd more by what might most reclaim,
Grieving to see his glory, at the sight
Took envy; and aspiring to his height,
Stood reimbattl'd fierce, by force or fraud
Weening to prosper, and at length prevail
Against God and Messiah, or to fall
In universal ruin last; and now
To final battle drew, disdaining flight,
Or faint retreat: when the great Son of God
To all his hosts on either hand thus spake:
  Stand still in bright array, ye Saints, here stand
Ye angels arm'd! this day from battle rest;
Faithful hath been your warfare, and of God
Accepted, fearless in his righteous cause;
And as ye have received, so have ye done
Invincibly; but of this cursed crew
The punishment to other hand belongs;
Vengeance is his, or whose he sole appoints:

Number to this day's work is not ordain'd,
Nor multitude; stand only and behold
God's indignation on these godless pour'd
By me; not you but me they have despis'd,
Yet envied; against me is all their rage,
Because the Father, to' whom in Heav'n supreme
Kingdom, and power, and glory appertains,
Hath honour'd me according to his will.
Therefore to me their doom he hath assign'd;
That they may have their wish, to try with me
In battle which the stronger proves; they all,
Or I alone against them, since by strength
They measure all, of other excellence
Not emulous, nor care who them excels;
Nor other strife with them do I vouchsafe.
So spake the Son, and into terror chang'd
His count'nance, too severe to be beheld!
And full of wrath bent on his enemies.
At once the Four spread out their starry wings
With dreadful shade contiguous, and the orbs
Of his fierce chariot roll'd, as with the sound
Of torrent floods, or of a numerous host.
He on his impious foes right onward drove,
Gloomy as night; under his burning wheels
The steadfast empyrean shook throughout,
All but the throne itself of God. Full soon
Among them he arriv'd, in his right hand
Grasping ten thousand thunders, which he sent
Before him, such as in their souls infix'd
Plagues; they astonish'd, all resistance lost,
All courage; down their idle weapons dropt;
O'er shields and helms and helmed heads he rode,
Of thrones and mighty seraphim prostrate,
That wish'd the mountains now might be again
Thrown on them as a shelter from his ire.
Nor less on either side tempestuous fell
His arrows from the four-fold visag'd Four
Distinct with eyes, and from the living wheels
Distinct alike with multitude of eyes;
One spirit in them rul'd, and every eye
Glar'd light'ning, and shot forth pernicious fire
Among th' accurs'd, that wither'd all their strength

And of their wonted vigour left them drain'd,
Exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fall'n.
Yet half his strength he put not forth, but check'd
His thunder in mid volly; for he meant
Not to destroy, but root them out of Heav'n:
The overthrown he rais'd, and as a herd
Of goats or tim'rous flock, together throng'd,
Drove them before him thunder-struck, pursued
With terrors and with furies to the bounds
And crystal wall of Heav'n, which opening wide,
Roll'd inward, and a spacious gap disclos'd
Into the wasteful Deep; the monstrous sight
Struck them with horror backwards: but far worse
Urg'd them behind; headlong themselves they threw
Down from the verge of Heav'n; eternal Wrath
Burn'd after them to the bottomless pit.
  Hell heard th' unsufferable noise; Hell saw
Heav'n ruining from Heav'n, and would have fled
Affrighted; but strict Fate had cast too deep
Her dark foundations, and too fast had bound.
Nine days they fell: confounded Chaos roar'd,
And felt tenfold confusion in their fall
Through his wild anarchy, so huge a rout
Incumber'd him with ruin: Hell at last
Yawning receiv'd them whole, and on them clos'd;
Hell their fit habitation, fraught with fire
Unquenchable, the house of woe and pain.
Disburden'd Heav'n rejoic'd, and soon repair'd
Her mural breach, returning whence it roll'd.
Sole victor from th' expulsion of his foes,
Messiah his triumphal chariot turn'd:
To meet him all his saints, who silent stood
Eye-witnesses of his almighty acts,
With jubilee advanc'd; and as they went,
Shaded with branching palm, each order bright
Sung triumph, and him sung victorious King,
Son, Heir, and Lord, to him dominion given,
Worthiest to reign; he celebrated rode
Triumphant through mid Heav'n, into the courts
And temple of his mighty Father thron'd
On high; who into glory him receiv'd,
Where now he sits at the right hand of bliss.

Thus measuring things in Heav'n by things on earth,
At thy request, and that thou may'st beware
By what is past, to thee I have reveal'd
What might have else to human race been hid;
The discord which befel, and war in Heav'n
Among th' angelic powers, and the deep fall
Of those too high aspiring, who rebell'd
With Satan; he who envies now thy state,
Who now is plotting how he may seduce
Thee also from obedience, that with him
Bereav'd of happiness thou may'st partake
His punishment, eternal misery;
Which would be all his solace and revenge,
As a despite done against the Most High,
Thee once to gain companion of his woe.
But listen not to his temptations; warn
Thy weaker; let it profit thee to' have heard,
By terrible example, the reward
Of disobedience; firm they might have stood,
Yet fell; remember and fear to transgress.

BOOK VII.

THE ARGUMENT.

Raphael, at the request of Adam, relates how and wherefore this world was first created; that God, after the expelling of Satan and his angels out of Heaven, declared his pleasure to create another world and other creatures to dwell therein; sends his Son with glory and attendance of angels, to perform the work of creation in six days: the angels celebrate with hymns the performance thereof, and his re-ascension into Heaven.

DESCEND from Heav'n, Urania, by that name
If rightly thou art call'd, whose voice divine
Following, above th' Olympian hill I soar,
Above the flight of Pegasean wing.
The meaning, not the name, I call: for thou,
Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top
Of old Olympus dwell'st, but heav'nly born,
Before the hills appear'd, or fountain flow'd,
Thou with eternal wisdom didst converse,

Wisdom thy sister, and with her didst play
In presence of th' Almighty Father, pleas'd
With thy celestial song. Upled by thee
Into the Heav'n of Heav'ns, I have presum'd,
An earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air,
Thy temp'ring; with like safety guided down
Return me to my native element:
Lest from this flying steed unrein'd, (as once
Bellerophon, tho' from a lower clime)
Dismounted, on th' Aleian field I fall
Erroneous there to wander, and forlorn.
Half yet remains unsung, but narrower bound
Within the visible diurnal sphere;
Standing on earth, nor rapt above the pole,
More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchang'd
To hoarse or mute, tho' fall'n on evil days,
On evil days though fall'n and evil tongues;
In darkness, and with dangers compass'd round,
And solitude; yet not alone, while thou
Visit'st my slumbers nightly, or when Morn
Purples the east: still govern thou my song,
Urania, and fit audience find, tho' few:
But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race
Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
In Rhodope, where woods and rocks had ears
To rapture, till the savage clamour drown'd
Both harp and voice; nor could the Muse defend
Her son. So fail not thou, who thee implores:
For thou art heavenly, she an empty dream.
  Say, Goddess, what ensued, when Raphael,
The affable Arch-angel, had forewarn'd
Adam, by dire example, to beware
Apostacy, by what befel in Heav'n
To those apostates, lest the like befal
In Paradise, to Adam or his race,
Charg'd not to touch the interdicted tree,
If they transgress, and slight that sole command,
So easily obey'd amid the choice
Of all tastes else to please their appetite,
Tho' wand'ring. He, with his consorted Eve,
The story heard attentive, and was fill'd
With admiration, and deep muse, to hear

Of things so high and strange; things to their thought
So unimaginable as hate in Heav'n,
And war so near the peace of God in bliss,
With such confusion: but the evil soon,
Driv'n back, redounded as a flood on those
From whom it sprung, impossible to mix
With blessedness. Whence Adam soon repeal'd
The doubts that in his heart arose: and now
Led on, yet sinless, with desire to know
(What nearer might concern him,) how this world
Of Heav'n and Earth conspicuous first began;
When, and whereof created; for what cause;
What within Eden or without was done
Before his memory, as one whose drought
Yet scarce allay'd, still eyes the current stream,
Whose liquid murmur heard new thirst excites,
Proceeded thus to ask his heav'nly guest:
  Great things, and full of wonder in our ears,
Far differing from this world, thou hast reveal'd,
Divine interpreter, by favour sent
Down from the empyrean, to forewarn
Us timely' of what might else have been our loss,
Unknown, which human knowledge could not reach:
For which to th' infinitely Good we owe
Immortal thanks, and his admonishment
Receive, with solemn purpose to observe
Immutably his sov'reign will, the end
Of what we are. But since thou hast vouchsaf'd
Gently for our instruction to impart
Things above earthly thought, which yet concern'd
Our knowing, as to highest wisdom seem'd,
Deign to descend now lower, and relate
What may no less perhaps avail us known,
How first began this Heaven which we behold
Distant so high, with moving fires adorn'd
Innumerable, and this which yields or fills
All space, the ambient air wide interfus'd
Embracing round this florid earth; what cause
Mov'd the Creator in his holy rest
Through all eternity so late to build
In Chaos, and the work begun, how soon
Absolv'd, if unforbid thou may'st unfold

What we, not to explore the secrets ask
Of his eternal empire, but the more
To magnify his works, the more we know.
And the great light of day yet wants to run
Much of his race, tho' steep; suspense in Heav'n,
Held by thy voice, thy potent voice, he hears,
And longer will delay to hear thee tell
His generation, and the rising birth
Of Nature from the unapparent Deep:
Or if the star of evening and the moon
Haste to thy audience, Night with her will bring
Silence, and Sleep list'ning to thee will watch,
Or we can bid his absence, till thy song
End, and dismiss thee e'er the morning shine.
  Thus Adam his illustrious guest besought:
And thus the godlike Angel answer'd mild.
This also thy request, with caution ask'd,
Obtain: tho' to recount Almighty works
What words or tongue of seraph can suffice,
Or heart of man suffice to comprehend?
Yet what thou canst attain, which best may serve
To glorify the Maker, and infer
Thee also happier, shall not be with-held
Thy hearing: such commission from above
I have receiv'd, to answer thy desire
Of knowledge within bounds; beyond abstain
To ask; nor let thine own inventions hope
Things not reveal'd, which th' invisible King,
Only omniscient, hath suppress'd in night,
To none communicable in Earth or Heav'n;
Enough is left besides to search and know.
But knowledge is as food, and needs no less
Her temp'rance over appetite, to know
In measure what the mind may well contain;
Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
Wisdom to folly', as nourishment to wind.
  Know, then, that after Lucifer from Heav'n
(So call him, brighter once amidst the host
Of Angels than that star the stars among)
Fell with his flaming legions through the deep
Into his place, and the great Son return'd
Victorious with his Saints, th' Omnipotent

Eternal Father from his throne beheld
Their multitude, and to his Son thus spake:
  At least our envious foe hath fail'd, who thought
All like himself rebellious, by whose aid
This inaccessible high strength, the seat
Of Deity Supreme, us dispossess'd,
He trusted to have seiz'd, and into fraud
Drew many, whom their place knows here no more:
Yet far the greater part have kept, I see,
Their station; Heav'n yet populous retains
Number sufficient to possess her realms,
Tho' wide, and this high temple to frequent
With ministeries due and solemn rites:
But lest his heart exalt him in the harm
Already done, to have dispeopled Heav'n,
My damage fondly deem'd, I can repair
That detriment, if such it be to lose
Self-lost, and in a moment will create
Another world; out of one man a race
Of men innumerable, there to dwell,
Not here, till by degrees of merit rais'd
They open to themselves at length the way
Up hither, under long obedience try'd,
And Earth be chang'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth,
One kingdom, joy and union without end.
Meanwhile inhabit lax, ye Pow'rs of Heav'n,
And thou my word, begotten Son, by thee
This I perform; speak thou, and be it done:
My overshadowing Sp'rit and might with thee
I send along; ride forth, and bid the Deep
Within appointed bounds be Heav'n and Earth;
Boundless the Deep, because I AM who fill
Infinitude, nor vacuous the space.
Tho' I uncircumscrib'd myself retire,
And put not forth my goodness, which is free
To act or not: Necessity and Chance
Approach not me, and what I will is fate.
  So spake th' Almighty; and to what he spake
His Word, the filial Godhead, gave effect.
Immediate are the acts of God, more swift
Than time or motion, but to human ears
Cannot without process of speech be told;

So told as earthly notion can receive.
Great triumph and rejoicing was in Heav'n,
When such was heard declar'd, th' Almighty's will;
Glory they sung to the Most High, good will
To future men, and in their dwellings peace:
Glory to him, whose just avenging ire
Had driv'n out th' ungodly from his sight,
And th' habitations of the just; to him
Glory and praise, whose wisdom had ordain'd
Good out of evil to create, instead
Of sp'rits malign a better race to bring
Into their vacant room, and thence diffuse
His good to worlds and ages infinite.
So sang the Hierarchies: meanwhile the Son
On his great expedition now appear'd,
Girt with Omnipotence, with radiance crown'd
Of majesty divine; sapience and love
Immense, and all his Father in him shone.
About his chariot numberless were pour'd
Cherub, and seraph, potentates, and thrones,
And virtues, winged spirits, and chariots wing'd
From th' armoury of God, where stand of old
Myriads between two brazen mountains lodg'd
Against a solemn day, harness'd at hand,
Celestial equipage! and now came forth
Spontaneous (for within them spirit liv'd,)
Attendant on their Lord: Heav'n open'd wide
Her ever-during gates, harmonious sound!
On golden hinges moving, to let forth
The King of Glory, in his powerful Word
And Spirit coming to create new worlds.
On heav'nly ground they stood, and from the shore
They view'd the vast immeasurable abyss,
Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
Up from the bottom turn'd by furious winds
And surging waves, as mountains, to assault
Heav'n's height, and with the centre mix the pole.
Silence, ye troubled Waves, and thou Deep, peace,
Said then th' omnific Word; your discord end·
Nor stay'd, but on the wings of Cherubim
Uplifted, in paternal glory rode
Far into Chaos, and the world unborn;

For Chaos heard his voice: him all his train
Follow'd in bright procession, to behold
Creation, and the wonders of his might.
Then stay'd the fervid wheels, and in his hand
He took the golden compasses, prepar'd
In God's eternal store, to circumscribe
This universe, and all created things;
One foot he center'd, and the other turn'd
Round through the vast profundity obscure,
And said, Thus far extend, thus far thy bounds,
This be thy just circumference, O World!
Thus God the Heav'n created, thus the Earth,
Matter unform'd and void: darkness profound
Cover'd th' abyss; but on the wat'ry calm
His brooding wings the Sp'rit of God outspread,
And vital virtue' infus'd, and vital warmth
Throughout the fluid mass, but downward purg'd
The black tartareous cold infernal dregs,
Adverse to life: then founded, then conglob'd
Like things to like, the rest to several place
Disparted, and between spun out the air,
And Earth, self-balanc'd, on her centre hung.
  Let there be Light, said God, and forthwith Light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure,
Sprung from the deep, and from her native East
To journey through the airy gloom began,
Spher'd in a radiant cloud; for yet the sun
Was not; she in a cloudy tabernacle
Sojourn'd the while; God saw the light was good;
And light from darkness by the hemisphere
Divided: light the Day, and darkness Night
He nam'd. Thus was the first day ev'n and morn:
Nor past uncelebrated, nor unsung
By the celestial quires, when Orient light
Exhaling first from darkness, they beheld;
Birth-day of Heav'n and Earth; with joy and shout
The hollow universal orb they fill'd,
And touch'd their golden harps, and hymning prais'd
God and his works; Creator, him they sung,
Both when first evening was, and when first morn.
  Again, God said, Let there be firmanent
Amid the waters, and let it divide

The waters from the waters: and God made
The firmament, expanse of liquid, pure,
Transparent, elemental air, diffus'd
In circuit to the uttermost convex
Of this great round: partition firm and sure,
The waters underneath from those above
Dividing; for as Earth, so he the world
Built on circumfluous waters calm, in wide
Crystalline ocean, and the loud misrule
Of Chaos far remov'd, lest fierce extremes
Contiguous might distemper the whole frame:
And Heav'n he nam'd the Firmament: so even
And morning chorus sung the second day.
The earth was form'd; but in the womb as yet
Of waters, embryon immature involv'd,
Appear'd not: over all the face of Earth
Main ocean flow'd, not idle, but with warm
Prolific humour soft'ning all her globe,
Fermented the great mother to conceive,
Satiate with genial moisture, when God said,
Be gather'd now, ye waters under Heav'n,
Into one place, and let dry land appear.
Immediately the mountains huge appear
Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave
Into the clouds, their tops ascend the sky:
So high as heav'd the tumid hills, so low
Down sunk a hollow bottom, broad and deep,
Capacious bed of waters: thither they
Hasted with glad precipitance, uproll'd
As drops on dust conglobing from the dry;
Part rise in crystal wall, or ridge direct,
For haste; such flight the great command impress'd
On the swift floods: as armies at the call
Of trumpet (for of our armies thou hast heard)
Troop to their standard, so the wat'ry throng,
Wave rolling after wave, where way they found,
If steep with torrent rapture, if through plain,
Soft-ebbing; nor withstood them rock or hill,
But they, or under ground, or circuit wide,
With serpent error wand'ring, found their way,
And on the washy oose deep channels wore;
Easy, ere God had bid the ground be dry,

All but within those banks, where rivers now
Stream, and perpetual draw their humid train.
The dry land Earth, and the great receptacle
Of congregated waters, he call'd Seas;
And saw that it was good: and said, Let th' Earth
Put forth the verdant grass, herb yielding seed,
And fruit-tree yielding fruit after her kind,
Whose seed is in herself upon the Earth.
He scarce had said, when the bare earth, till then
Desert and bare, unsightly, unadorn'd,
Brought forth the tender grass, whose verdure clad
Her universal face with pleasant green;
Then herbs of every leaf, that sudden flower'd,
Opening their various colours, and made gay
Her bosom, smelling sweet: and these scarce blown,
Forth flourish'd thick the clust'ring vine, forth crept
The smelling gourd, up stood the corny reed
Embattl'd in her field, and th' humble shrub,
And bush with frizzled hair implicit: last
Rose, as in dance, the stately trees, and spread
Their branches hung with copious fruit, or gemm'd
Their blossoms; with high woods the hills were crown'd,
With tufts the valleys; and each fountain side,
With borders long the rivers: that Earth now
Seem'd like to Heav'n, a seat where gods might dwell,
Or wander with delight, and love to haunt
Her sacred shades: tho' God had yet not rain'd
Upon the Earth, and man to till the ground
None was, but from the Earth a dewy mist
Went up and water'd all the ground, and each
Plant of the field, which, ere it was in th' Earth
God made, and every herb, before it grew
On the green stem: God saw that it was good:
So ev'n and morn recorded the third day.
  Again th' Almighty spake: Let there be lights
High in th' expanse of Heav'n, to divide
The day from night; and let them be for signs,
For seasons, and for days, and circling years,
And let them be for lights, as I ordain
Their office in the firmament of Heav'n
To give light on the Earth; and it was so.
And God made two great lights, great for their use

To man, the greater to have rule by day,
The less by night altern; and made the stars,
And set them in the firmament of Heav'n,
T' illuminate the Earth, and rule the day
In their vicissitude, and rule the night;
And light from darkness to divide. God saw,
Surveying his great work, that it was good:
For of celestial bodies first the sun
A mighty sphere he fram'd, unlightsome first,
Tho' of ethereal mould: then form'd the moon
Globose and every magnitude of stars,
And sow'd with stars the Heav'n thick as a field:
Of light by far the greater part he took,
Transplanted from her cloudy shrine, and plac'd
In the sun's orb, made porous to receive
And drink the liquid light, firm to retain
Her gather'd beams, great palace now of light.
Hither, as to their fountain, other stars
Repairing, in their golden urns draw light,
And hence the morning planet gilds her horns;
By tincture or reflection they augment
Their small peculiar, though from human sight
So far remote, with diminution seen.
First in his East the glorious lamp was seen,
Regent of day, and all th' horizon round
Invested with bright rays, jocund to run
His longitude thro' Heav'n's high road; the gray
Dawn, and the Pleiades before him danc'd,
Shedding sweet influence: less bright the moon,
But opposite in level'd West was set,
His mirror, with full face borrowing her light
From him, for other light she needed none
In that aspect, and still that distance keeps
Till night; then in the east her turn she shines,
Revolv'd on Heav'n's great axle, and her reign
With thousand lesser lights dividual holds,
With thousand thousand stars, that then appear'd
Spangling the hemisphere: then first adorn'd
With their bright luminaries that set and rose,
Glad Ev'ning and glad Morn crown'd the fourth day.
  And God said, Let the waters generate
Reptile with spawn abundant, living soul:

And let fowl fly above the Earth, with wings
Display'd on th' open firmament of Heav'n;
And God created the great whales, and each
Soul living, each that crept, which plenteously
The waters generated by their kinds,
And every bird of wing after his kind;
And saw that it was good, and bless'd them, saying,
Be fruitful, multiply, and in the seas,
And lakes, and running streams, the waters fill;
And let the fowl be multiply'd on th' Earth.
Forthwith the sounds and seas, each creek and bay,
With fry innumerable swarm, and shoals
Of fish that with their fins and shining scales
Glide under the green wave, in sculls that oft
Bank the mid sea: part single or with mate
Graze the sea weed, their pasture, and through groves
Of coral stray, or sporting with quick glance
Shew to the sun their wav'd coats dropt with gold,
Or in their pearly shells at ease, attend
Moist nutriment, or under rocks their food
In jointed armour watch: on smooth the seal,
And bended dolphins play: part, huge of bulk,
Wallowing unwieldly, enormous in their gait,
Tempest the ocean: there leviathan,
Hugest of living creatures, on the deep
Stretch'd like a promontory, sleeps or swims,
And seems a moving land, and at his gills
Draws in, and at his trunk spouts out a sea.
Mean while the tepid caves, and fens, and shores,
Their brood as numerous hatch, from th' egg that soon
Bursting with kindly rupture forth disclos'd
Their callow young, but feather'd soon and fledge
They summ'd their pens, and soaring th' air sublime
With clang despis'd the ground, under a cloud
In prospect; there the eagle and the stork
On cliffs and cedar tops their eyries build:
Part loosely wing the region, part more wise
In common, rang'd in figure, wedge their way,
Intelligent of seasons, and set forth
Their airy caravan high over seas
Flying, and over lands with mutual wing
Easing their flight; so steers the prudent crane
Her annual voyage, borne on winds; the air

Floats, as they pass, fann'd with unnumber'd plumes.
From branch to branch the smaller birds with song
Solac'd the woods, and spread their painted wings,
Till ev'n; nor then the solemn nightingale
Ceas'd warbling, but all night tun'd her soft lays:
Others on silver lakes and rivers bath'd
Their downy breasts; the swan, with arched neck,
Between her white wings mantling proudly, rows
Her state with oary feet; yet oft they quit
The dank, and rising on stiff penons, tower
The mid aereal sky: others on ground
Walk'd firm: the crested cock, whose clarion sounds
The silent hours, and th' other whose gay train
Adorns him, colour'd with the florid hue
Of rainbows and starry eyes. The waters thus
With fish replenish'd, and the air with fowl,
Ev'ning and Morn, solemniz'd the fifth day.
  The sixth, and of creation last, arose
With evening harps and matin; when God said,
Let th' Earth bring forth fowl living in her kind,
Cattle and creeping things, and beast of th' Earth,
Each in their kind. The Earth obey'd, and straight
Opening her fertile womb, teem'd at a birth
Innumerous living creatures, perfect forms,
Limb'd and full grown; out of the ground up rose,
As from his lair, the wild beast, where he wons
In forest wild, in thicket, brake, or den;
Among the trees in pairs they rose, they walk'd:
The cattle in the fields and meadows green:
Those rare and solitary, those in flocks
Pasturing at once, and in broad herds upsprung.
The grassy clods now calv'd, now half appear'd
The tawny lion, pawing to get free
His hinder parts, then springs as broke from bonds,
And rampant shakes his brinded mane; the ounce,
The libard and the tiger, as the mole
Rising, the crumbled earth above them threw
In hillocks: the swift stag from underground
Bore up his branching head: scarce from his mould
Behemoth, biggest born of Earth, upheav'd
His vastness: fleec'd the flocks and bleating, rose

As plants: ambiguous between sea and land,
The river horse and scaly crocodile.
At once came forth whatever creeps the ground,
Insect or worm: those wav'd their limber fans
For wings, and smallest lineaments exact
In all the liveries deck'd of summer's pride,
With spots of gold and purple, azure and green:
These, as a line their long dimension drew,
Streaking the ground with sinuous trace; not all
Minims of Nature; some of serpent kind,
Wondrous in length and corpulence, involv'd
Their snaky folds, and added wings. First crept
The parsimonious emmet, provident
Of future, in small room large heart enclos'd,
Pattern of just equality perhaps
Hereafter, join'd in her popular tribes
Of commonalty: swarming next appear'd
The female bee, that feeds her husband drone
Deliciously, and builds her waxen cells
With honey stor'd: the rest are numberless,
And thou their natures know'st, and gav'st them names,
Needless to thee repeated; nor unknown
The serpent, subtlest beast of all the field,
Of huge extent sometimes, with brazen eyes
And hairy mane terrific, though to thee
Not noxious, but obedient at thy call.
  Now Heav'n in all her glory shone, and roll'd
Her motions, as the great first Mover's hand
First wheel'd their course; Earth, in her rich attire
Consummate lovely smil'd; air, water, earth,
By fowl, fish, beast, was flown, was swum, was walk'd
Frequent; and of the sixth day yet remain'd;
There wanted yet the master-work, the end
Of all yet done; a creature who not prone
And brute as other creatures, but endu'd
With sanctity of reason, might erect
His stature and upright with front serene
Govern the rest, self-knowing, and from thence
Magnanimous to correspond with Heav'n;
But grateful to acknowledge whence his good
Descends; thither with heart, and voice, and eyes
Directed in devotion, to adore
And worship God supreme, who made him chief

Of all his works: therefore th' Omnipotent
Eternal Father (for where is not he
Present?) thus to his Son audibly spake:
  Let us make now Man in our image, Man
In our similitude, and let them rule
Over the fish and fowl of sea, and air,
Beast of the field, and over all the Earth,
And every creeping thing that creeps the ground.
This said, he form'd thee, Adam, thee, O man,
Dust of the ground, and in thy nostrils breath'd
The breath of life; in his own image he
Created thee, in the image of God
Express, and thou becam'st a living soul.
Male he created thee, but thy consort
Female for race; then bless'd Mankind, and said
Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the Earth;
Subdue it, and throughout dominion hold
Over fish of the sea, and fowl of th' air,
And every living thing that moves on th' Earth,
Wherever thus created; for no place
Is yet distinct by name: thence, as thou know'st,
He brought thee into this delicious grove,
This garden, planted with the trees of God,
Delectable both to behold and taste;
And freely all their pleasant fruit for food
Gave thee; all sorts are here that all th' Earth yields,
Variety without end; but of the tree
Which tasted works knowledge of good and evil,
Thou may'st not; in the day thou eat'st thou dy'st;
Death is the penalty impos'd; beware,
And govern well thy appetite, lest Sin
Surprise thee, and her black attendant Death.
  Here finish'd he; and all that he had made
View'd; and behold all was entirely good;
So Ev'n and Morn accomplish'd the sixth day:
Yet not till the Creator from his work
Desisting, though unwearied, up return'd,
Up to the Heav'n of Heav'ns, his high abode,
Thence to behold this new-created world,
Th' addition of his empire, how it shew'd
In prospect from his throne, how good, how fair,
Answering his great idea. Up he rode

Follow'd with acclamation and the sound
Symphonious of ten thousand harps that tun'd
Angelic harmonies: the earth, the air
Resounded, (thou remember'st, for thou heard'st)
The Heav'ns and all the constellations rung.
The planets in their station list'ning stood,
While the bright pomp ascended jubilant.
Open, ye everlasting Gates, they sung,
Open, ye Heav'ns, your living doors; let in
The great Creator, from his work return'd
Magnificent, his six day's work, a World;
Open, and henceforth oft; for God will deign
To visit oft the dwellings of just Men
Delighted, and with frequent intercourse
Thither will send his winged messengers
On errands of supernal grace. So sung
The glorious train ascending: he through Heav'n,
That open'd wide her blazing portals, led
To God's eternal house direct the way,
A broad and ample road, whose dust is gold
And pavement stars, as stars to thee appear,
Seen in the galaxy, that milky way,
Which nightly as a circling zone thou seest
Powder'd with stars. And now on Earth the seventh
Evening arose in Eden, for the sun
Was set, and twilight from the east came on,
Forerunning Night; when, at the holy mount
Of Heav'n's high-seated top, th' imperial throne
Of Godhead, fix'd for ever firm and sure,
The filial Power arriv'd, and sat him down
With his great Father; for he also went
Invisible, yet stay'd, (such privilege
Hath Omnipresence) and the work ordain'd,
Author and end of all things, and from work
Now resting, bless'd and hallow'd the sev'nth day,
As resting on that day from all his work,
But not in silence holy kept; the harp
Had work, and rested not; the solemn pipe,
And dulcimer, all organs of sweet stop,
All sounds on fret by string or golden wire,
Temper'd soft tunings, intermix'd with voice
Choral or unison: of incense clouds

Fuming from golden censers hid the mount.
Creation and the six days acts they sung.
Great are thy works, Jehovah, infinite
Thy power: what thought can measure thee or tongue
Relate thee? greater now in thy return,
Than from the giant angels; thee that day
Thy thunders magnify'd; but to create,
Is greater, than created, to destroy;
Who can impair thee, mighty King, or bound
Thy empire? easily the proud attempt
Of spirits apostate and their counsels vain
Thou hast repell'd, while impiously they thought
Thee to diminish, and from thee withdraw
The number of thy worshippers. Who seeks
To lessen thee, against his purpose serves
To manifest the more thy might; his evil
Thou usest, and from thence creat'st more good.
Witness this new-made World, another Heav'n!
From Heav'n gate not far, founded in view
On the clear hyaline, the glassy sea;
Of amplitude almost immense, with stars
Numerous, and every star perhaps a world
Of destin'd habitation; but thou know'st
Their seasons: among these the seat of men,
Earth with her nether ocean circumfus'd,
Their pleasant dwelling place. Thrice happy men,
And sons of men, whom God hath thus advanc'd,
Created in his image, there to dwell
And worship him, and in reward to rule
Over his works, on earth, in sea, or air,
And multiply a race of worshippers
Holy and just: thrice happy if they know
Their happiness, and persevere upright.
So sung they; and the empyrean rung
With hallelujahs: thus was sabbath kept.
And thy request think now fulfill'd, that ask'd
How first this World, and face of things began,
And what before thy memory was done
From the beginning, that posterity
Inform'd by thee might know; if else thou seek'st
Aught, not surpassing human measure, say.

BOOK VIII.

THE ARGUMENT.

Adam inquires concerning celestial motions, is doubtfully answer'd, and exhorted to search rather things more worthy of knowledge: Adam assents, and still desirous to detain Raphael, relates to him what he remember'd since his own creation, his placing in Paradise, his talk with God concerning solitude and fit society, his first meeting and nuptials with Eve, his discourse with the angel thereupon; who after admonitions repeated departs.

THE angel ended; and in Adam's ear
So charming left his voice, that he awhile
Thought him still speaking, still stood fix'd to hear;
Then, as new wak'd, thus gratefully reply'd:
What thanks sufficient, or what recompense
Equal have I to render thee, divine
Historian, who thus largely hast allay'd
The thirst I had of knowledge, and vouchsaf'd
This friendly condescension to relate
Things else by me unsearchable, now heard
With wonder, but delight, and as is due,
With glory attributed to the high
Creator? Something yet of doubt remains,
Which only thy solution can resolve.
When I behold this goodly frame, this world,
Of Heav'n and Earth consisting, and compute
Their magnitudes; this Earth, a spot, a grain,
An atom, with the firmament compar'd,
And all her number'd stars, that seem to roll
Spaces incomprehensible (for such
Their distance argues and their swift return
Diurnal) merely to officiate light
Round this opacous Earth, this punctual spot,
One day and night in all their vast survey
Useless besides; reas'ning I oft admire,
How Nature, wise and frugal, could commit
Such disproportions, with superfluous hand
So many nobler bodies to create,
Greater so manifold to this one use,

For aught appears, and on their orbs impose
Such restless revolution, day by day
Repeated, while the sedentary Earth,
That better might with far less compass move,
Serv'd by more noble than herself, attains
Her end without least motion, and receives,
As tribute, such a sumless journey brought
Of incorporeal speed, her warmth and light;
Speed, to describe whose swiftness number fails.
  So spake our sire; and by his count'nance seem'd
Ent'ring on studious thoughts abstruse; which Eve
Perceiving, where she sat retir'd in sight,
With lowliness majestic from her seat,
And grace that won who saw to wish her stay,
Rose, and went forth among her fruits and flowers,
To visit how they prosper'd, bud and bloom,
Her nursery; they at her coming sprung,
And touch'd by her fair tendence gladlier grew.
Yet went she not, as not with such discourse
Delighted, or not capable her ear
Of what was high: such pleasure she reserv'd,
Adam relating, she sole auditress;
Her husband the relator she preferr'd,
Before the angel, and of him to ask
Chose rather; he, she knew, would intermix
Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute
With conjugal caresses; from his lip
Not words alone pleas'd her. O when meet now
Such pairs in love and mutual honour join'd!
With goddess-like demeanour forth she went,
Not unattended, for on her, as queen,
A pomp of winning graces waited still,
And from about her shot darts of desire
Into all eyes, to wish her still in sight.
And Raphael now to Adam's doubt propos'd,
Benevolent and facile, thus reply'd:
  To ask or search I blame thee not; for Heav'n
Is as the book of God before thee set,
Wherein to read his wondrous works, and learn
His season, hours, or days, or months, or years:
This to attain, whether Heav'n move or Earth,
Imports not, if thou reckon right; the rest

From man or angel the great Architect
Did wisely to conceal, and not divulge
His secrets to be scann'd by them who ought
Rather admire; or if they list to try
Conjecture, he his fabric of the Heav'ns
Hath left to their disputes, perhaps to move
His laughter at their quaint opinions wide
Hereafter, when they come to model Heav'n
And calculate the stars, how they will wield
The mighty frame, how build, unbuild, contrive
To save appearances, how gird the sphere
With centric and eccentric scribbled o'er,
Cycle and epicycle, orb in orb:
Already by thy reasoning this I guess,
Who art to lead thy offspring, and supposest
That bodies bright and greater should not serve
The less not bright, nor Heav'n such journeys run,
Earth sitting still, when she alone receives
The benefit: consider first, that great
Or bright infers not excellence: the Earth,
Though in comparison of Heav'n, so small,
Nor glist'ring, may of solid good contain
More plenty than the Sun that barren shines;
Whose virtue on itself works no effect,
But in the fruitful Earth; there first receiv'd
His beams, unactive else, their vigour find.
Yet not to Earth or those bright luminaries
Officious, but to thee, Earth's habitant.
And for the Heav'n's wide circuit, let it speak
The Maker's high magnificence, who built
So spacious, and his line stretch'd out so far,
That man may know he dwells not in his own;
An edifice too large for him to fill,
Lodg'd in a small partition, and the rest
Ordain'd for uses to his Lord best known.
The swiftness of those circles attribute,
Though numberless, to his omnipotence,
That to corporeal substances could add
Speed almost spiritual; me thou think'st not slow,
Who since the morning hour set out from Heav'n
Where God resides, and e'er mid day arriv'd
In Edens distance inexpressible

By numbers that have name. But this I urge,
Admitting motion in the Heav'ns, to shew
Invalid that which thee to doubt it mov'd;
Not that I so affirm, though so it seem
To thee, who hast thy dwelling here on Earth.
God to remove his ways from human sense,
Plac'd Heav'n from Earth so far, that earthly sight,
If it presume, might err in things too high,
And no advantage gain. What if the sun
Be centre to the world, and other stars
By his attractive virtue and their own
Incited, dance about him various rounds?
Their wand'ring course now high, now low, then hid,
Progressive, retrograde, or standing still,
In six thou seest: and what if seventh to these
The planet Earth, so stedfast though she seem,
Insensibly three different motions move?
Which else to several spheres thou must ascribe,
Mov'd contrary with thwart obliquities;
Or save the Sun his labour, and that swift
Nocturnal and diurnal rhomb suppos'd,
Invisible else above all stars, the wheel
Of day and night; which needs not thy belief
If Earth industrious of herself fetch day
Travelling east, and with her part averse
From the sun's beam meet night, her other part
Still luminous by his ray. What if that light
Sent from her through the wide transpicuous air,
To the terrestrial moon be as a star
Enlight'ning by her day, as she by night
This earth? reciprocal, if land be there,
Fields and inhabitants: her spots thou seest
As clouds, and clouds may rain, and rain produce
Fruits in her soften'd soil, for some to eat
Allotted there; and other suns perhaps
With their attendant moons thou wilt descry,
Communicating male and female light:
Which two great sexes animate the World;
Stor'd in each orb perhaps with some that live.
For such vast room in Nature unpossess'd
By living soul, desert and desolate,
Only to shine, yet scarce to contribute

Each orb a glimpse of light, convey'd so far
Down to this habitable, which returns
Light back to them, is obvious to dispute.
But whether thus these things, or whether not;
Whether the sun predominant in Heav'n
Rise on the Earth, or Earth rise on the sun;
He from the East his flaming road begin,
Or she from west her silent course advance,
With inoffensive pace, that spinning sleeps
On her soft axle, while she paces even,
And bears thee soft with the smooth air along,
Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid;
Leave them to God above, him serve and fear;
Of other creatures, as him pleases best,
Wherever plac'd, let him dispose: joy thou
In what he gives to thee, this Paradise
And thy fair Eve; Heav'n is for thee too high
To know what passes there; be lowly wise:
Think only what concerns thee and thy being;
Dream not of other worlds, what creatures there
Live, in what state, condition or degree,
Contented that thus far hath been reveal'd,
Not of Earth only, but of highest Heav'n.
　To whom thus Adam, clear'd of doubt, reply'd.
How fully hast thou satisfied me, pure
Intelligence of Heav'n, Angel serene,
And freed from intricacies, taught to live
The easiest way, nor with perplexing thoughts
To interrupt the sweet of life, from which
God hath bid dwell far off all anxious cares,
And not molest us, unless we ourselves
Seek them with wand'ring thoughts, and notions vain.
But apt the mind or fancy is to rove
Uncheck'd, and of her roving is no end;
Till warn'd, or by experience taught, she learn,
That not to know at large of things remote
From use, obscure and subtile, but to know
That which before us lies in daily life,
Is the prime wisdom; what is more, is fume
Or emptiness, or fond impertinence,
And renders us in things that most concern
Unpractis'd, unprepar'd, and still to seek.

Therefore from this high pitch let us descend
A lower flight, and speak of things at hand
Useful, whence haply mention may arise
Of something not unseasonable to ask,
By suff'rance and thy wonted favour deign'd.
Thee I have heard relating what was done
E'er my remembrance: now hear me relate
My story, which perhaps thou hast not heard;
And day is yet not spent; till then thou seest
How subtly to detain thee I devise,
Inviting thee to hear while I relate:
Fond, were it not in hope of thy reply:
For while I sit with thee, I seem in Heav'n,
And sweeter thy discourse is to my ear
Than fruits of palm-tree pleasantest to thirst
And hunger both, from labour, at the hour
Of sweet repast; they satiate, and soon fill
Though pleasant, but thy words with grace divine
Imbued, bring to their sweetness no satiety.
  To whom thus Raphael answer'd heav'nly meek.
Nor are thy lips ungraceful, Sire of Men,
Nor tongue ineloquent; for God on thee
Abundantly his gifts hath also pour'd;
Inward and outward both, his image fair:
Speaking or mute, all comeliness and grace
Attends thee, and each word, each motion forms;
Nor less think we in Heav'n of thee on Earth
Than of our fellow-servant, and inquire
Gladly into the ways of God with Man:
For God we see hath honour'd thee, and set
On man his equal love: say therefore on;
For I that day was absent, as befel,
Bound on a voyage uncouth and obscure,
Far on excursion tow'rd the gates of Hell;
Squar'd in full legion (such command we had)
To see that none thence issued forth a spy,
Or enemy, while God was in his work,
Lest he, incens'd at such eruption bold,
Destruction with creation might have mix'd.
Not that they durst without his leave attempt,
But us he sends upon his high behests
For state, as Sov'reign King, and to inure

Our prompt obedience. Fast we found, fast shut,
The dismal gates, and barricado'd strong;
But long e'er our approaching heard within
Noise, other than the sound of dance or song!
Torment and loud lament, and furious rage.
Glad we return'd up to the Coasts of Light
E'er sabbath evening: so we had in charge.
But thy relation now; for I attend,
Pleas'd with thy words no less than thou with mine.
So spake the godlike Power; and thus our Sire.
For man to tell how human life began
Is hard; for who himself beginning knew?
Desire with thee still longer to converse
Induc'd me. As new wak'd from soundest sleep,
Soft on the flowery herb I found me laid
In balmy sweat, which with his beams the sun
Soon dry'd, and on the reeking moisture fed.
Straight toward Heav'n my wond'ring eyes I turn'd,
And gaz'd awhile the ample sky, till rais'd
By quick instinctive motion up I sprung,
As thitherward endeavouring, and upright
Stood on my feet; about me round I saw
Hill, dale, and shady woods, and sunny plains,
And liquid lapse of murm'ring streams; by these,
Creatures that liv'd, and mov'd, and walk'd, or flew,
Birds on the branches warbling; all things smil'd,
With fragrance, and with joy my heart o'erflow'd.
Myself I then perus'd, and limb by limb
Survey'd, and sometimes went, and sometimes ran
With supple joints, as lively vigour led:
But who I was, or where, or from what cause,
Knew not; to speak I try'd, and forthwith spake;
My tongue obey'd, and readily could name
Whate'er I saw. Thou Sun, said I, fair light,
And thou enlighten'd Earth, so fresh and gay,
Ye hills, and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains,
And ye that live and move, fair creatures, tell,
Tell if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?—
Not of myself; by some great Maker then,
In goodness and in power pre-eminent;
Tell me how may I know him, how adore,
From whom I have that thus I move and live,

And feel that I am happier than I know.
While thus I call'd, and stray'd I knew not whither,
From where I first drew air, and first beheld
This happy light, when answer none return'd,
On a green shady bank profuse of flowers
Pensive I sat me down; there gentle Sleep
First found me, and with soft oppression seiz'd
My droused sense, untroubled, though I thought
I then was passing to my former state
Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve:
When suddenly stood at my head a Dream,
Whose inward apparition gently mov'd
My fancy to believe I yet had being,
And liv'd: One came, methought of shape divine,
And said, Thy mansion wants thee, Adam, rise,
First Man, of men innumerable ordain'd
First Father! call'd by thee I come thy guide
To the Garden of Bliss, thy seat prepar'd.
So saying, by the hand he took me rais'd,
And over fields and waters, as in air
Smooth sliding without step, last led me up
A woody mountain, whose high top was plain,
A circuit wide enclos'd, with goodliest trees
Planted, with walks, and bowers, that what I saw
Of Earth before scarce pleasant seem'd. Each tree
Loaden with fairest fruit that hung to th' eye
Tempting, stirr'd in me sudden appetite
To pluck and eat; whereat I wak'd and found
Before mine eyes all real, as the dream
Had lively shadow'd: here had new begun
My wand'ring, had not he who was my guide
Up hither, from among the trees appear'd,
Presence divine. Rejoicing, but with awe,
In adoration at his feet I fell
Submiss: he rear'd me, and whom thou sought'st I am,
Said mildly, author of all this thou seest
Above, or round about thee, or beneath.
This Paradise I give thee, count it thine
To till, and keep, and of the fruit to eat:
Of every tree that in the garden grows,
Eat freely with glad heart; fear here no dearth:
But of the tree whose operation brings

Knowledge of good and ill, which I have set
The pledge of thy obedience and thy faith,
Amid the garden by the tree of life,
Remember what I warn thee, shun to taste,
And shun the bitter consequence: for know,
The day thou eat'st thereof, my sole command
Transgress'd, inevitably thou shalt die,
From that day mortal, and this happy state
Shalt lose, expell'd from hence into a world
Of woe and sorrow. Sternly he pronounc'd
The rigid interdiction, which resounds
Yet dreadful in mine ear, though in my choice
Not to incur; but soon his clear aspect
Return'd, and gracious purpose thus renew'd.
Not only these fair bounds, but all the Earth,
To thee and to thy race I give; as lords
Possess it, and all things that therein live,
Or live in sea, or air, beast, fish, and fowl.
In sign whereof each bird and beast behold
After their kinds; I bring them to receive
From thee their names, and pay thee fealty
With low subjection; understand the same
Of fish within their wat'ry residence
Not hither summon'd, since they cannot change
Their element to draw the thinner air.
As thus he spake each bird and beast behold
Approaching two and two; these cow'ring low,
With blandishment; each bird stoop'd on his wing.
I nam'd them, as they pass'd, and understood
Their nature, with such knowledge God indued
My sudden apprehension: but in these
I found not what methought I wanted still;
And to the heav'nly Vision thus presum'd:
  O by what name, for thou above all these,
Above mankind, or aught than mankind higher,
Surpassest far my naming, how may I
Adore thee, Author of this universe,
And all this good to man? for whose well being
So amply, and with hands so liberal,
Thou hast provided all things: but with me
I see not who partakes. In solitude
What happiness? who can enjoy alone,

Or all enjoying, what contentment find?
Thus I, presumptuous; and the Vision bright,
As with a smile more brighten'd, thus reply'd:
  What call'st thou solitude? is not the Earth
With various living creatures, and the air
Replenish'd, and all these at thy command
To come and play before thee? know'st thou not
Their language and their ways? they also know,
And reason not contemptibly; with these
Find pastime and bear rule; thy realm is large.
So spake the universal Lord, and seem'd
So ord'ring. I with leave of speech implor'd,
And humble deprecation, thus reply'd.
  Let not my words offend thee, heav'nly Power;
My Maker, be propitious while I speak.
Hast thou not made me here thy substitute,
And these inferior far beneath me set?
Among unequals what society
Can sort, what harmony or true delight?
Which must be mutual, in proportion due
Giv'n and receiv'd; but in disparity
The one intense, the other still remiss
Cannot well suit with either, but soon prove
Tedious alike: of fellowship I speak
Such as I seek, fit to participate
All rational delight, wherein the brute
Cannot be human consort; they rejoice
Each with their kind, lion with lioness;
So fitly them in pairs thou hast combin'd;
Much less can bird with beast, or fish with fowl
So well converse, nor with the ox the ape;
Worse then can man with beast, and least of all.
  Whereto th' Almighty answer'd, not displeas'd.
A nice and subtile happiness I see
Thou to thyself proposest, in the choice
Of thy associates, Adam, and wilt taste
No pleasure, though in pleasure, solitary.
What think'st thou then of me, and this my state?
Seem I to thee sufficiently possess'd
Of happiness or not? who am alone
From all eternity, for none I know
Second to me, or like, equal much less.

How have I then with whom to hold converse,
Save with the creatures which I made, and those
To me inferior, infinite descents
Beneath what other creatures are to thee?
  He ceas'd; I lowly answer'd. To attain
The height and depth of thy eternal ways
All human thoughts come short, Supreme of things;
Thou in thyself art perfect, and in thee
Is no deficience found: not so is man,
But in degree, the cause of his desire
By conversation with his like to help,
Or solace his defects. No need that thou
Should'st propagate, already infinite,
And through all numbers absolute, though one;
But man by number is to manifest
His single imperfection, and beget
Like of his like, his image multiply'd,
In unity defective, which requires
Collateral love, and dearest amity.
Thou in thy secresy although alone,
Best with thyself accompanied, seek'st not
Social communication, yet so pleas'd,
Canst raise thy creature to what height thou wilt
Of union or communion, deify'd;
I by conversing cannot these erect
From prone, nor in their ways complacence find.
Thus I embolden'd spake, and freedom us'd
Permissive, and acceptance found, which gain'd
This answer from the gracious voice divine.
  Thus far to try thee, Adam, I was pleas'd,
And find thee knowing not of beasts alone,
Which thou hast rightly nam'd, but of thyself,
Expressing well the spirit within thee free,
My image, not imparted to the brute,
Whose fellowship therefore unmeet for thee,
Good reason was, thou freely shouldst dislike;
And be so minded still; I, ere thou speak'st,
Knew it not good for man to be alone,
And no such company as then thou saw'st
Intended thee, for trial only brought,
To see how thou could'st judge of fit and meet:
What next I bring shall please thee, be assur'd,

Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self,
Thy wish, exactly to thy heart's desire.
  He ended, or I heard no more; for now
My earthly by his heav'nly overpower'd,
Which it had long stood under, strain'd to th' height
In that celestial colloquy sublime,
As with an object that excels the sense
Dazzled and spent, sunk down and sought repair
Of sleep, which instantly fell on me, call'd
By Nature as in aid, and clos'd mine eyes.
Mine eyes he clos'd, but open left the cell
Of fancy, my internal sight, by which
Abstract, as in a trance, methought I saw,
Though sleeping, where I lay, and saw the shape
Still glorious before whom awake I stood:
Who stooping open'd my left side, and took
From thence a rib, with cordial spirits warm,
And life-blood streaming fresh; wide was the wound,
But suddenly with flesh fill'd up and heal'd:
The rib he form'd and fashion'd with his hands;
Under his forming hands a creature grew
Manlike, but different sex; so lovely fair,
That what seem'd fair in all the world, seem'd now
Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contain'd
And in her looks; which from that time infus'd
Sweetness into my heart unfelt before,
And into all things from her air inspir'd
The spirit of love and amorous delight.
She disappear'd, and left me dark: I wak'd
To find her, or for ever to deplore
Her loss, and other pleasures all abjure:
When out of hope, behold her, not far off,
Such as I saw her in my dream, adorn'd
With what all Earth or Heaven could bestow
To make her amiable: on she came,
Led by her heav'nly Maker, though unseen,
And guided by his voice, nor uninform'd
Of nuptial sanctity and marriage rites:
Grace was in all her steps, Heav'n in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love.
I overjoy'd could not forbear aloud:
  This turn hath made amends; thou hast fulfill'd

Thy words, Creator bounteous and benign,
Giver of all things fair, but fairest this
Of all thy gifts, nor enviest. I now see
Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, myself
Before me; Woman is her name, of Man
Extracted; for this cause he shall forego
Father and mother, and to his wife adhere;
And they shall be one flesh, one heart, one soul.
She heard me thus; and tho' divinely brought
Yet innocence and virgin modesty,
Her virtue and the conscience of her worth,
That would be woo'd, and not unsought be won,
Not obvious, not obtrusive, but retir'd
The more desirable, or to say all,
Nature herself, though pure of sinful thought,
Wrought in her so, that seeing me, she turn'd;
I follow'd her, she what was honour knew,
And with obsequious majesty approv'd
My pleàded reason. To the nuptial bower
I led her blushing like the Morn: all Heav'n,
And happy constellations on that hour
Shed their selectest influence; the Earth
Gave sign of gratulation, and each hill;
Joyous the birds; fresh gales and gentle airs
Whisper'd it to the woods, and from their wings
Flung rose, flung odours from the spicy shrub,
Disporting! till the amorous bird of night
Sung spousal, and bid haste the evening star
On his hill top, to light the bridal lamp.
Thus have I told thee all my state, and brought
My story to the sum of earthly bliss
Which I enjoy, and must confess to find
In all things else delight indeed, but such
As us'd or not, works in the mind no change,
Nor vehement desire; these delicacies
I mean of taste, sight, smell, herbs, fruits, and flowers,
Walks, and the melody of birds; but here
Far otherwise, transported I behold,
Transported touch; here passion first I felt,
Commotion strange, in all enjoyments else
Superior and unmov'd, here only weak
Against the charm of Beauty's powerful glance.

Or nature fail'd in me, and left some part
Not proof enough such object to sustain,
Or from my side subducting, took perhaps
More than enough; at least on her bestow'd
Too much of ornament, in outward shew
Elaborate, of inward less exact.
For well I understand in the prime end
Of Nature her th' inferior, in the mind
And inward faculties which most excel,
In outward also her resembling less
His image who made both, and less expressing
The character of that dominion given
O'er other creatures; yet when I approach
Her loveliness, so absolute she seems,
And in herself complete, so well to know
Her own, that what she wills to do or say
Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best;
All higher knowledge in her presence falls
Degraded, Wisdom in discourse with her
Loses, discountenanc'd, and like Folly shews;
Authority and Reason on her wait,
As one intended first, not after made
Occasionally; and to consummate all,
Greatness of mind, and Nobleness their seat
Build in her loveliest, and create an awe
About her, as a guard angelic plac'd.
  To whom the angel with contracted brow.
Accuse not Nature, she hath done her part;
Do thou but thine, and be not diffident
Of Wisdom; she deserts thee not, if thou
Dismiss not her, when most thou need'st her nigh,
By attributing over much to things
Less excellent, as thou thyself perceiv'st.
For what admir'st thou, what transports thee so?
An outside, fair no doubt, and worthy well
Thy cherishing, thy honouring, and thy love,
Not thy subjection: weigh with her thyself;
Then value: oft-times nothing profits more,
Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right
Well manag'd; of that skill the more thou know'st,
The more she will acknowledge thee her head,
And to realities yield all her shews:
Made so, adorn for thy delight the more,

So awful, that with honour thou may'st love
Thy mate, who sees when thou art seen least wise.
But if the sense of touch whereby mankind
Is propagated seem such dear delight
Beyond all other, think the same vouchsaf'd
To cattle and each beast; which would not be
To them made common and divulg'd, if aught
Therein enjoy'd were worthy to subdue
The soul of man, or passion in him move.
What higher in her society thou find'st
Attractive, human, rational, love still;
In loving thou dost well, in passion not,
Wherein true love consists not; Love refines
The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat
In reason, and is judicious; is the scale
By which to heav'nly love thou may'st ascend,
Not sunk in carnal pleasure, for which cause
Among the beasts no mate for thee was found.
  To whom thus half abash'd Adam reply'd:
Neither her outside form'd so fair, nor aught
In procreation common to all kinds
(Though higher of the genial bed by far,
And with mysterious reverence I deem)
So much delights me, as those graceful acts,
Those thousand decencies that daily flow
From all her words and actions, mix'd with love
And sweet compliance, which declare unfeign'd
Union of mind, or in us both one soul;
Harmony to behold in wedded pair,
More grateful than harmonious sound to th' ear.
Yet these subject not; I to thee disclose
What inward thence I feel, not therefore foil'd,
Who meet with various objects, from the sense
Variously representing; yet still free
Approve the best, and follow what I approve.
To love thou blam'st me not, for love thou says't
Leads up to Heav'n, is both the way and guide;
Bear with me then, if lawful what I ask;
Love not the heav'nly spirits, and how their love
Express they, by looks only', or do they mix
Irradiance, virtual or immediate touch?
  To whom the angel, with a smile that glow'd

Celestial rosy red, Love's proper hue,
Answer'd. Let it suffice thee that thou know'st
Us happy', and without love no happiness.
Whatever pure thou in the body' enjoy'st
(And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
In eminence, and obstacle find none
Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive bars;
Easier than air with air, if sp'rits embrace,
Total they mix, union of pure with pure
Desiring; nor restrain'd conveyance need
As flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul.
But I can now no more; the parting sun
Beyond the Earth's green cape and verdant isles
Hesperian sets, my signal to depart.
Be strong, live happy, and love, but first of all
Him whom to love is to obey, and keep
His great command; take heed lest passion sway
Thy judgment to do aught, which else free will
Would not admit; thine and of all thy sons
The weal or woe in thee is plac'd; beware!
I in thy persevering shall rejoice,
And all the Blest; stand fast; to stand or fall
Free in thine own arbitrement it lies:
Perfect within, no outward aid require;
And all temptation to transgress repel.
  So saying, he arose; whom Adam thus
Follow'd with benediction: since to part,
Go heav'nly guest, ethereal messenger,
Sent from whose sov'reign goodness I adore.
Gentle to me and affable hath been
Thy condescension, and shall be honour'd ever
With grateful memory: thou to mankind
Be good and friendly still, and oft return.
  So parted they, the angel up to Heav'n
From the thick shade, and Adam to his bower.

BOOK IX.

THE ARGUMENT.

Satan having compassed the earth with meditated guile, returns as a mist by night into Paradise, enters into the serpent sleeping. Adam and Eve, in the morning, go forth to their labours, which Eve proposes to divide in several places, each labouring apart: Adam consents not, alleging the danger, lest that enemy, of whom they were forewarned, should attempt her found alone: Eve, loath to be thought not circumspect or firm enough, urges her going apart, the rather desirous to make trial of her strength; Adam at last yields: the serpent finds her alone; his subtile approach, first gazing, then speaking, with much flattery, extolling Eve above all other creatures. Eve, wondering to hear the serpent speak, asks how he attained to human speech and such understanding not till now; the serpent answers, that by tasting of a certain tree in the garden, he attained both to speech and reason, till then void of both: Eve requires him to bring her to that tree, and finds it to be the Tree of Knowledge forbidden: The serpent now grown bolder, with many wiles and arguments, induces her at length to eat: she, pleased with the taste, deliberates awhile whether to impart thereof to Adam or not, at last brings him of the fruit, relates what persuaded her to eat thereof: Adam, at first amazed, but perceiving her lost, resolves, through vehemence of love, to perish with her; and, extenuating the trespass, eats also of the fruit: the effects thereof in them both; they seek to cover their nakedness; then fall to variance and accusation of one another.

No more of talk where God or Angel guest
With Man, as with his friend, familiar us'd
To sit indulgent, and with him partake
Rural repast, permitting him the while
Venial discourse unblam'd; I now must change
Those notes to tragic; foul distrust and breach
Disloyal on the part of man, revolt,
And disobedience: on the part of Heav'n,
Now alienated, distance and distaste,
Anger and just rebuke, and judgment giv'n,
That brought into this world, a world of woe,
Sin and her shadow Death, and Misery

Death's harbinger: sad task, yet argument
Not less, but more heroic than the wrath
Of stern Achilles on his foe pursu'd
Thrice fugitive about Troy wall; or rage
Of Turnis for Lavinia disespous'd,
Or Neptune's ire, or Juno's, that so long
Perplex'd the Greek and Cytherea's son;
If answerable style I can obtain
Of my celestial Patroness, who deigns
Her nightly visitation unimplor'd,
And dictates to me slumb'ring, or inspires
Easy my unpremeditated verse:
Since first this subject for heroic song
Pleas'd me, long choosing, and beginning late;
Not sedulous by nature to indite
Wars, hitherto the only argument
Heroic deem'd, chief mastery to dissect
With long and tedious havock fabled knights
In battles feign'd; the better fortitude
Of Patience and heroic Martyrdom
Unsung; or to describe races and games,
Or tilting furniture, emblazon'd shields,
Impresses quaint, caparisons and steeds;
Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights
At joust and tournament; then marshal'd feast
Serv'd up in hall with sewers, and seneshals;
The skill of artifice or office mean,
Not that which justly gives heroic name
To person or to poem. Me, of these
Nor skill'd, nor studious, higher argument
Remains, sufficient of itself to raise
That name, unless an age too late, or cold
Climate, or years, damp my intended wing
Depress'd: and much they may, if all be mine,
Not hers, who brings it nightly to my ear.
  The sun was sunk, and after him the star
Of Hesperus, whose office is to bring
Twilight upon the Earth, short arbiter
'Twixt day and night, and now from end to end
Night's hemisphere had veil'd th' horizon round:
When Satan who late fled before the threats
Of Gabriel out of Eden, now improv'd

In meditated fraud and malice, bent
On man's destruction, maugre what might hap
Of heavier on himself, fearless return'd.
By night he fled, and at midnight return'd
From compassing the earth, cautious of day,
Since Uriel, regent of the sun descry'd
His entrance, and forewarn'd the cherubim
That kept their watch; thence full of anguish driven,
The space of sev'n continued nights he rode
With darkness, thrice the equinoctional line
He circl'd, four times cross'd the car of Night
From pole to pole, traversing each colure;
On th' eighth return'd, and on the coast averse
From entrance or cherubic watch, by stealth
Found unsuspected way. There was a place,
Now not, (though Sin not Time, first wrought the change)
Where Tigris at the foot of Paradise
Into a gulf shot under ground, till part
Rose up a fountain by the Tree of Life;
In with the river sunk, and with it rose
Satan involv'd in rising mist, then sought
Where to lie hid; sea he had search'd and land
From Eden over Pontus, and the pool
Mœotis, up beyond the river Ob;
Downward as far antarctic; and in length
West from Orontes to the ocean barr'd
At Darien, thence to the land where flows
Ganges and Indus: thus the orb he roam'd
With narrow search, and with inspection deep,
Considered every creature, which of all
Most opportune might serve his wiles, and found
The serpent, subt'lest beast of all the field;
Him, after long debate, irresolute
Of thoughts revolv'd, his final sentence chose
Fit vessel, fittest imp of fraud, in whom
To enter, and his dark suggestions hide
From sharpest sight: for in the wily snake,
Whatever sleights none would suspicious mark,
As from his wit and native subtlety
Proceeding, which in other beasts observ'd,
Doubt might beget of diabolic pow'r,

Active within beyond the sense of brute.
Thus he resolv'd; but first from inward grief
His bursting passion into plaints thus pour'd.
O Earth, how like to Heav'n! if not preferr'd
More justly, seat worthier of gods, as built
With second thoughts, reforming what was old!
For what God, after better, worse would build?
Terrestrial Heav'n, danc'd round by other heav'ns
That shine, yet bear their bright officious lamps,
Light above light, for thee alone, as seems,
In thee concentring all their precious beams
Of sacred influence! As God in Heav'n
Is centre, yet extends to all; so thou
Centring, receiv'st from all those orbs; in thee,
Not in themselves, all their known virtue' appears
Productive, in herb, plant, and nobler birth
Of creatures animate, with gradual life
Of growth, sense, reason, all summ'd up in man.
With what delight could I have walk'd thee round,
If I could joy in aught: sweet interchange
Of hill, and valley, rivers, woods, and plains,
Now land, now sea, and shores with forest crown'd,
Rocks, dens, and caves! but I in none of these
Find place or refuge; and the more I see
Pleasures about me, so much more I feel
Torment within me', as from the hateful siege
Of contraries; all good to me becomes
Bane, and in Heav'n much worse would be my state.
But neither here seek I; no, nor in Heav'n
To dwell, unless by mast'ring Heav'n's Supreme;
Nor hope to be myself less miserable
By what I seek, but others to make such
As I, tho' thereby worse to me redound:
For only in destroying I find ease
To my relentless thoughts; and him destroyed,
Or won to what may work his utter loss,
For whom all this was made, all this will soon
Follow, as to him link'd in weal or woe.
In woe then, that destruction wide may range:
To me shall be the glory sole among
Th' infernal powers, in one day to have marr'd
What he Almighty styl'd, six nights and days

Continued making; and who knows how long
Before had been contriving, tho' perhaps
Not longer than since I in one night freed
From servitude inglorious well nigh half
Th' angelic name, and thinner left the throng
Of his adorers: he, to be aveng'd,
And to repair his numbers thus impair'd,
Whether such virtue spent of old now fail'd
More Angels to create, if they at least
Are his created, or to spite us more,
Determin'd to advance into our room
A creature form'd of earth, and him endow,
Exalted from so base original,
With heav'nly spoils, our spoils: what he decreed
He effected; Man he made, and for him built
Magnificent this world, and Earth his seat,
Him lord pronounc'd; and, O indignity!
Subjected to his service angel wings,
And flaming ministers, to watch and tend
Their earthly charge: of these the vigilance
I dread; and to elude, thus wrapt in mist
Of midnight vapour glide obscure, and pry
In every bush and brake, where hap may find
The serpent sleeping, in whose mazy folds
To hide me, and the dark intent I bring.
O foul descent! that I, who erst contended
With gods to sit the high'st, am now constrain'd
Into a beast, and mixt with bestial slime,
This essence to incarnate and imbrute;
That to the height of Deity aspir'd!
But what will not ambition and revenge
Descend to? who aspires, must down as low
As high he soar'd, obnoxious first or last
To basest things. Revenge, at first tho' sweet,
Bitter ere long, back on itself recoils;
Let it; I reck not, so it light well aim'd;
Since higher I fall short, on him who next
Provokes my envy, this new favourite
Of Heav'n, this Man of Clay, Son of Despite,
Whom us the more to spite, his Maker rais'd
From dust: Spite, then, with spite, is best repaid.
So saying, through each thicket, dank or dry,

Like a black mist low creeping, he held on
His midnight search, where, soonest, he might find
The serpent: him fast sleeping soon he found
In labyrinth of many a round self-roll'd,
His head the midst, well stor'd with subtile wiles:
Not yet in horrid shade or dismal den,
Nor nocent yet, but on the grassy herb
Fearless, unfear'd he slept: in, at his mouth
The Devil enter'd, and his brutal sense,
In heart or head, possessing soon inspir'd
With act intelligential; but his sleep
Disturb'd not, waiting close th' approach of morn.
  Now when, as sacred light began to dawn
In Eden on the humid flowers, that breath'd
Their morning incense, when all things that breathe,
From th' Earth's great altar send up silent praise
To the Creator, and his nostrils fill
With grateful smell, forth came the human Pair,
And join'd their vocal worship to the quire
Of creatures wanting voice; that done, partake
The season, prime for sweetest scents and airs:
Then commune how that day they best may ply
Their growing work; for much their work outgrew
The hands' dispatch of two gard'ning so wide,
And Eve, first to her husband thus began:
  Adam, well may we labour still to dress
This garden, still to tend plant, herb, and flower,
Our pleasant task enjoin'd; but till more hands
Aid us, the work under our labour grows
Luxuriant by restraint; what we by day
Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,
One night or two with wanton growth derides,
Tending to wild. Thou, therefore, now advise,
Or hear what to my mind first thoughts present;
Let us divide our labours, thou, where choice
Leads thee, or where most needs, whether to wind
The woodbine round this arbour, or direct
The clasping ivy where to climb, while I
In yonder spring, of roses intermix'd
With myrtle, find what to redress, till noon:
For while so near each other thus all day
Our task we choose, what wonder if, so near,

Looks intervene, and smiles, or object new
Casual discourse draw on, which intermits
Our day's work, brought to little, tho' begun
Early, and th' hour of supper comes unearn'd.
  To whom, mild answer Adam thus return'd:
Sole Eve, associate sole, to me beyond
Compare, above all living creatures dear,
Well hast thou motion'd, well thy thoughts employ'd,
How we might best fulfil the work which here
God hath assign'd us, nor of me shalt pass
Unprais'd: for nothing lovelier can be found
In woman, than to study household good,
And good works in her husband to promote.
Yet not so strictly hath our Lord impos'd
Labour, as to debar us when we need
Refreshment, whether food, or talk between.
Food of the mind, or this sweet intercourse
Of looks and smiles; for smiles from reason flow,
To brute deny'd, and are of love the food,
Love, not the lowest end of human life.
For not to irksome toil, but to delight
He made us, and delight to reason join'd.
The paths and bowers doubt not but our joint hands
Will keep from wilderness with ease, as wide
As we need walk, till younger hands, ere long
Assist us: but if much converse perhaps
Thee satiate, to short absence I could yield:
For solitude, sometimes, is best society,
And short retirement urges sweet return.
But other doubt possesses me, lest harm
Befal thee sever'd from me; for thou know'st
What hath been warn'd us, what malicious foe
Envying our happiness, and of his own
Despairing, seeks to work us woe and shame
By sly assault; and some where nigh at hand
Watches, no doubt, with greedy hope to find
His wish and best advantage, us asunder,
Hopeless to circumvent us join'd, where each
To other speedy aid might lend at need;
Whether his first design be to withdraw
Our fealty from God, or to disturb
Conjugal love, than which, perhaps, no bliss

Enjoy'd by us excites his envy more;
Or this, or worse, leave not the faithful side
That gave thee being, still shades thee, and protects.
The wife, where danger or dishonour lurks,
Safest and seemliest by her husband stays,
Who guards her, or with her the worst endures.
  To whom the virg'n majesty of Eve,
As one who loves and some unkindness meets,
With sweet austere composure thus reply'd.
  Offspring of Heav'n and Earth, and all Earth's lord,
That such an enemy we have, who seeks
Our ruin, both by thee inform'd I learn,
And from the parting angel overheard,
As in a shady nook I stood behind,
Just then return'd at shut of evening flowers.
But that thou shouldst my firmness therefore doubt
To God or thee, because we have a foe
May tempt it, I expected not to hear.
His violence thou fear'st not, being such
As we, not capable of death or pain,
Can either not receive, or can repel.
His fraud is then thy fear, which plain infers
Thy equal fear, that my firm faith and love
Can by his fraud be shaken or seduc'd;
Thoughts, which how found they harbour in thy breast,
Adam, misthought of her to thee so dear?
  To whom, with healing words, Adam reply'd:
Daughter of God and Man, immortal Eve,
For such thou art, from sin and blame entire:
Not diffident of thee do I dissuade
Thy absence from my sight, but to avoid
Th' attempt itself intended by our foe.
For he who tempts, though in vain, at least asperses
The tempted with dishonour foul, suppos'd
Not incorruptible of faith, not proof
Against temptation: thou thyself, with scorn
And anger, wouldst resent the offer'd wrong,
Tho' ineffectual found; misdeem not then,
If such affront I labour to avert
From thee alone, which on us both at once
The enemy, tho' bold, will hardly dare,
Or daring, first on me th' assault shall light,

Nor thou his malice and false guile contemn;
Subtle he needs must be, who could seduce
Angels; nor think superfluous others aid.
I, from the influence of thy looks, receive
Access in every virtue; in thy sight
More wise, more watchful, stronger, if need were
Of outward strength; while shame, thou looking on,
Shame to be overcome or over-reach'd
Would utmost vigour raise, and rais'd, unite.
Why shouldst not thou like sense within thee feel
When I am present, and thy trial choose
With me, best witness of thy virtue try'd?
  So spake domestic Adam in his care
And matrimonial love; but Eve, who thought
Less attributed to her faith sincere,
Thus her reply, with accent sweet, renew'd.
  If this be our condition, thus to dwell
In narrow circuit straiten'd by a foe,
Subtle or violent, we not endued
Single with like defence, wherever met,
How are we happy, still in fear of harm?
But harm precedes not sin: only our foe
Tempting affronts us with his foul esteem
Of our integrity: his foul esteem
Sticks no dishonour on our front, but turns
Foul on himself: then wherefore shunn'd or fear'd
By us? who rather double honour gain
From his surmise prov'd false, find peace within,
Favour from Heav'n, our witness from th' event.
And what is faith, love, virtue unassay'd
Alone, without exterior help sustain'd?
Let us not then suspect our happy state
Left so imperfect by the Maker wise,
As not secure to single or combin'd.
Frail is our happiness, if this be so,
And Eden were no Eden thus expos'd.
  To whom thus Adam fervently reply'd:
O Woman, best are all things as the will
Of God ordain'd them; his creating hand
Nothing imperfect or deficient left
Of all that he created, much less man,
Or aught that might his happy state secure.

Secure from outward force, within himself
The danger lies, yet lies within his power:
Against his will he can receive no harm.
But God left free the will, for what obeys
Reason, is free, and Reason he made right,
But bid her well beware, and still erect,
Lest, by some fair appearing good surpris'd,
She dictate false, and misinform the will,
To do what God expressly hath forbid.
Not then mistrust, but tender love enjoins,
That I should mind thee oft, and mind thou me.
Firm we subsist, yet possible to swerve,
Since reason not impossibly may meet
Some specious object by the foe suborn'd,
And fall into deception unaware,
Not keeping strictest watch, as she was warn'd.
Seek not temptation then, which to avoid
Were better, and most likely, if from me
Thou sever not: trial will come unsought.
Wouldst thou approve thy constancy? approve
First thy obedience; th' other who can know,
Not seeing thee attempted? who attest?
But if thou think, trial unsought may find
Us both securer than thus warn'd thou seem'st,
Go; for thy stay, not free, absents thee more;
Go in thy native innocence, rely
On what thou hast of virtue, summon all;
For God tow'rds thee hath done his part; do thine.
So spake the Patriarch of Mankind; but Eve
Persisted, yet submiss, though last, reply'd:
With thy permission then, and thus forewarn'd
Chiefly by what thy own last reasoning words
Touch'd only, that our trial, when least sought,
May find us both perhaps far less prepar'd,
The willinger I go, nor much expect
A foe so proud will first the weaker seek;
So bent, the more shall shame him his repulse.
Thus saying, from her husband's hand, her hand
Soft she withdrew; and, like a wood-nymph light,
Oread or Dryad, or of Delia's train,
Betook her to the groves; but Delia's self
In gait surpass'd, and goddess-like deport:

Tho' not as she with bow and quiver arm'd,
But with such gard'ning tools as art, yet rude,
Guiltless of fire, had form'd, or Angels brought.
To Pales, or Pomona, thus ador'd,
Likest she seem'd; Pomona, when she fled
Vertumnus, or to Ceres in her prime,
Yet virgin of Proserpina from Jove.
Her, long with ardent look his eye pursu'd
Delighted, but desired more her stay.
Oft he to her his charge of quick return
Repeated, she to him, as oft engag'd
To be return'd by noon amid the bower,
And all things in best order to invite
Noon-tide repast, or afternoon's repose.
O much deceiv'd, much failing, hapless Eve,
Of thy presum'd return! event perverse!
Thou never from that hour in Paradise
Found'st either sweet repast, or sound repose:
Such ambush laid among sweet flow'rs and shades
Waited with hellish rancour imminent
To intercept thy way, or send thee back
Despoil'd of innocence, of faith, of bliss.
For now, and since first break of dawn, the Fiend,
Mere serpent in appearance, forth was come,
And on his quest, where likeliest he might find
The only two of mankind, but in them
The whole included race, his purpos'd prey.
In bower and field he sought where any tuft
Of grove or garden plot more pleasant lay,
Their tendence or plantation for delight;
By fountain or by shady rivulet
He sought them both, but wish'd his hap might find
Eve separate; he wish'd, but not with hope
Of what so seldom chanc'd, when to his wish,
Beyond his hope, Eve separate he spies,
Veil'd in a cloud of fragrance, where she stood,
Half spy'd, so thick the roses blushing round
About her glow'd, oft stooping to support
Each flower of slender stalk, whose head, though gay
Carnation, purple', azure, or speck'd with gold,
Hung drooping unsustain'd; them she upstays
Gently with myrtle band, mindless the while

Herself, tho' fairest unsupported flower,
From her best prop so far, and storm so nigh.
Nearer he drew, and many a walk travers'd
Of stateliest covert, cedar, pine, or palm;
Then voluble and bold, now hid, now seen
Among thick-woven arborets and flowers
Imborder'd on each bank, the hand of Eve:
Spot more delicious than those gardens feign'd,
Or of reviv'd Adonis, or renown'd
Alcinous, host of old Laertes' son;
Or that, not mystic, where the sapient king
Held dalliance with his fair Egyptian spouse.
Much he the place admir'd, the person more.
As one who long in populous city pent,
Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,
Forth issuing on a summer's morn to breathe
Among the pleasant villages and farms
Adjoin'd, from each thing met conceives delight,
The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,
Or dairy', each rural sight, each rural sound;
If chance, with nymph-like step, fair virgin pass,
What pleasing seem'd, for her now pleases more,
She most, and in her look sums all delight.
Such pleasure took the serpent to behold
This flowery plat, the sweet recess of Eve
Thus early, thus alone; her heav'nly form
Angelic, but more soft and feminine
Her graceful innocence, her every air
Of gesture or least action overaw'd
His malice, and with rapine sweet bereav'd
His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:
That space the Evil-one abstracted stood
From his own evil, and for the time remain'd
Stupidly good, of enmity disarm'd,
Of guile, of hate, of envy, of revenge;
But the hot hell that always in him burns,
Tho' in mid Heav'n, soon ended his delight,
And tortures him now more, the more he sees
Of pleasure, not for him ordain'd: then soon
Fierce hate he recollects, and all his thoughts
Of mischief, gratulating, thus excites.
  Thoughts, whither have ye led me! with what sweet

Compulsion thus transported to forget
What hither brought us! hate, not love, nor hope
Of Paradise for Hell, hope here to taste
Of pleasure, but all pleasure to destroy,
Save what is in destroying; other joy
To me is lost. Then let me not let pass
Occasion, which now smiles; behold! alone
The Woman, opportune to all attempts;
Her husband, for I view far round, not nigh,
Whose higher intellectual more I shun,
And strength, of courage haughty, and of limb
Heroic built, tho' of terrestrial mould,
Foe not informidable, exempt from wound,
I, not; so much hath Hell debas'd, and pain
Enfeebled me, to what I was in Heav'n.
She, fair, divinely fair, fit love for gods,
Not terrible, tho' terror be in love
And beauty, not approach'd by stronger hate,
Hate stronger, under shew of love well feign'd,
The way which to her ruin now I tend.
  So spake the enemy' of mankind, enclos'd
In serpent, inmate bad, and tow'rd Eve
Address'd his way, not with indented wave,
Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,
Circular base of rising folds, that tower'd
Fold above fold, a surging maze, his head
Crested aloft, and carbuncle his eyes;
With burnish'd neck of verdant gold, erect
Amidst his circling spires, that on the grass
Floated redundant: pleasing was his shape
And lovely; never since of serpent kind
Lovelier, not those that in Illyria chang'd
Hermione and Cadmus, or the God
In Epidaurus; nor to which transform'd
Ammonian Jove, or Capitoline was seen,
He, with Olympias, this with her who bore
Scipio, the height of Rome. With tract oblique
At first, as one who sought access, but fear'd
To interrupt, side-long he works his way:
As when a ship, by skilful steersman wrought
Nigh river's mouth, or foreland, where the wind
Veers oft, as oft so steers and shifts her sail:

So varied he, and of his tortuous train
Curl'd many a wanton wreath in sight of Eve,
To lure her eye; she, busied, heard the sound
Of rustling leaves, but minded not, as us'd
To such disport before or through the field,
From every beast, more duteous at her call
Than at Circean call the herd disguis'd.
He, bolder now, uncall'd before her stood,
But as in gaze admiring: oft he bow'd
His turret crest, and sleek enamel'd neck,
Fawning, and lick'd the ground whereon she trod.
His gentle dumb expression turn'd, at length,
The eye of Eve to mark his play; he, glad
Of her attention gain'd, with serpent tongue
Organic, or impulse of vocal air,
His fraudulent temptation thus began:
  Wonder not, sov'reign Mistress, if, perhaps,
Thou canst, who art sole wonder; much less arm
Thy looks, the heav'n of mildness, with disdain,
Displeas'd that I approach thee thus, and gaze
Insatiate; I thus single, nor have fear'd
Thy awful brow, more awful thus retir'd.
Fairest resemblance of thy Maker fair,
Thee, all things living gaze on, all things thine
By gift, and thy celestial beauty' adore,
With ravishment beheld; there, best beheld
Where universally admir'd; but here
In this inclosure wild, these beasts among,
Beholders rude! and shallow to discern
Half what in thee is fair, one man except,
Who sees thee'? (and what is one!) who shouldst be seen
A goddess among gods, ador'd and serv'd
By angels numberless, thy daily train.
  So gloz'd the tempter, and his proem tun'd;
Into the heart of Eve his words made way,
Tho' at the voice much marvelling; at length,
Not unamaz'd, she thus in answer spake:
What may this mean? language of man pronounc'd
By tongue of brute, and human sense express'd!
The first at least of these I thought deny'd
To beasts, whom God, on their creation-day,

Created mute to all articulate sound;
The latter I demur; for in their looks
Much reason, and in their actions oft appears.
Thee, Serpent, subt'lest beast of all the field
I knew, but not with human voice indu'd;
Redouble then this miracle, and say,
How cam'st thou speakable of mute, and how,
To me so friendly grown above the rest
Of brutal kind, that daily are in sight?
Say; for such wonder claims attention due.
  To whom the guileful tempter thus reply'd:
Empress of this fair world, resplendent Eve,
Easy to me it is to tell thee all
What thou command'st, and right thou shouldst be obey'd:
I was at first as other beasts that graze
The trodden herb, of abject thoughts and low,
As was my food; nor aught but food discern'd,
Or sex, and apprehended nothing high:
Till, on a day roving the field, I chanc'd
A goodly tree far distant to behold,
Loaden with fruit of fairest colours mix'd,
Ruddy and gold: I nearer drew to gaze;
When from the boughs a savoury odour blown,
Grateful to appetite, more pleas'd my sense
Than smell of sweetest fennel, or the teats
Of ewe or goat dropping with milk at even,
Unsuck'd of lamb or kid, that tend their play.
To satisfy the sharp desire I had
Of tasting those fair apples, I resolv'd
Not to defer; hunger and thirst at once,
Powerful persuaders! quicken'd at the scent
Of that alluring fruit, urg'd me so keen.
About the mossy trunk I wound me soon;
For high from ground the branches would require
Thy utmost reach, or Adam's: round the tree
All other beasts that saw, with like desire
Longing and envying stood, but could not reach.
Amid the tree now got, where plenty hung
Tempting so nigh, to pluck and eat my fill,
I spar'd not, for such pleasure till that hour
At feed or fountain never had I found.

Sated at length, ere long I might perceive
Strange alteration in me, to degree
Of reason in my inward powers, and speech
Wanted not long, tho' to this shape retain'd.
Thenceforth, to speculations high or deep
I turn'd my thoughts, and with capacious mind
Consider'd all things visible in Heav'n,
Or earth, or middle, all things fair and good;
But all that fair and good in thy divine
Semblance, and in thy beauty's heav'nly ray
United I beheld; no fair to thine
Equivalent or second, which compell'd
Me thus, tho' importune perhaps, to come
And gaze, and worship thee, of right declar'd,
Sov'reign of creatures, universal dame.
So talk'd the spirited sly snake; and Eve
Yet more amaz'd, unwary thus reply'd:
Serpent, thy overpraising leaves in doubt
The virtue of that fruit, in thee first prov'd:
But say, where grows the tree, from hence how far?
For many are the trees of God that grow
In Paradise, and various, yet unknown
To us, in such abundance lies our choice,
As leaves a greater store of fruit untouch'd,
Still hanging incorruptible, till men
Grow up to their provision, and more hands
Help to disburden Nature of her birth.
To whom the wily adder blithe and glad:
Empress, the way is ready, and not long;
Beyond a row of myrtles, on a flat,
Fast by a fountain, one small thicket past
Of blowing myrrh and balm; if thou accept
My conduct, I can bring thee thither soon.
Lead then, said Eve. He leading swiftly roll'd
In tangles, and made intricate seem straight,
To mischief swift. Hope elevates, and joy
Brightens his crest. As when a wand'ring fire,
Compact of unctuous vapour, which the night
Condenses, and the cold environs round,
Kindled, through agitation, to a flame,
(Which oft, they say, some evil sp'rit attends)
Hovering and blazing, with delusive light,

Misleads th' amaz'd night-wand'rer from his way,
Thro' bogs and mires, and oft through pond or pool,
There swallow'd up and lost, from succour far;
So glister'd the dire snake, and into fraud
Led Eve, our credulous mother, to the tree
Of prohibition, root of all our woe;
Which when she saw, thus to her guide she spake:
Serpent, we might have spar'd our coming hither,
Fruitless to me, tho' fruit be here t' excess;
The credit of whose virtue rest with thee,
Wond'rous indeed, if cause of such effects.
But of this tree we may not taste nor touch;
God so commanded, and left that command
Sole daughter of his voice; the rest, we live
Law to ourselves, our reason is our law.
To whom the Tempter guilefully reply'd:
Indeed! hath God then said, that of the fruit
Of all these garden trees ye shall not eat,
Yet lords declar'd of all in earth or air?
To whom thus Eve, yet sinless. Of the fruit
Of each tree in the garden we may eat,
But of the fruit of this fair tree amidst
The garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat
Thereof, nor shall ye touch it, lest ye die.
She scarce had said, though brief, when now more bold
The Tempter, but, with shew of zeal and love
To man, and indignation at his wrong,
New part puts on, and as to passion mov'd,
Fluctuates disturb'd, yet comely and in act
Rais'd, as of some great matter to begin.
As when of old some orator renown'd
In Athens or free Rome, where eloquence
Flourish'd, since mute, to some great cause address'd,
Stood in himself collected, while each part,
Motion, each act won audience, ere the tongue;
Sometimes in height began, as no delay
Of preface brooking through his zeal of right:
So standing, moving, or to height up grown,
The Tempter, all impassion'd, thus began:
O sacred, wise, and wisdom-giving Plant,
Mother of Science, now I feel thy power

Within me clear; not only to diſcern
Things in their causes, but to trace the ways
Of highest agents, deem'd however wise.
Queen of this universe, do not believe
Those rigid threats of death; ye shall not die:
How should you? by the fruit? it gives you life
To knowledge; by the Threat'ner? look on me,
Me who have touch'd and tasted, yet both live,
And life more perfect have attain'd than Fate
Meant me, by vent'ring higher than my lot.
Shall that be shut to man, which to the beast
Is open? or will God incense his ire
For such a petty trespass, and not praise
Rather your dauntless virtue, whom the pain
Of death denounc'd, whatever thing death be,
Deterr'd not from achieving what might lead
To happier life, knowledge of good and evil;
Of Good, how just? of evil, if what is evil
Be real, why not known, since easier shunn'd:
God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just;
Not just, not God; not fear'd then, nor obey'd:
Your fear itself of death removes the fear.
Why then was this forbid? why, but to awe,
Why but to keep you low and ignorant,
His worshippers; he knows that in the day
You eat thereof, your eyes that seem so clear,
Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then
Open'd and clear'd, and ye shall be as gods,
Knowing both good and evil, as they know.
That ye shall be as gods, since I as man,
Internal man, is but proportion meet;
I of brute human, ye of human gods,
So ye shall die perhaps, by putting off
Human, to put on gods; death to be wish'd,
Tho' threaten'd, which no worse than this can bring.
And what are gods, that man may not become
As they, participating god-like food?
The gods are first, and that advantage use
On our belief, that all from them proceeds:
I question it; for this fair earth I see,
Warm'd by the sun, producing every kind,
Them nothing: if they all things, who enclos'd

Knowledge of good and evil in this tree,
That whoso eats thereof, forthwith attains
Wisdom without their leave? and wherein lies
Th' offence, that man should thus attain to know?
What can your knowledge hurt him, or this tree
Impart against his will, if all be his?
Or is it envy, and can envy dwell
In heav'nly breasts? these, these and many more
Causes import your need of this fair fruit.
Goddess humane, reach then, and freely taste.
He ended; and his words, replete with guile,
Into her heart too easy entrance won:
Fix'd on the fruit she gaz'd, which to behold
Might tempt alone, and in her ears the sound
Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregn'd
With reason, to her seeming, and with truth;
Meanwhile the hour of noon drew on, and wak'd
An eager appetite, rais'd by the smell
So savoury of that fruit, which with desire,
Inclinable now grown to touch or taste
Solicited her longing eye; yet first
Pausing a while, thus to herself she mus'd:
Great are thy virtues, doubtless, best of fruits,
Tho' kept from man, and worthy to be admir'd,
Whose taste too long forborn, at first assay
Gave elocution to the mute, and taught
The tongue not made for speech to speak thy praise:
Thy praise he also who forbids thy use
Conceals not from us, naming thee the Tree
Of Knowledge, knowledge both of good and evil;
Forbids us then to taste; but his forbidding
Commends thee more, while it infers the good
By thee communicated, and our want:
For good unknown, sure is not had; or had,
And yet unknown, is as not had at all.
In plain, then, what forbids he but to know,
Forbids us good, forbids us to be wise?
Such prohibitions bind not. But if death
Bind us with after-bands, what profits then
Our inward freedom? In the day we eat
Of this fair fruit, our doom is, we shall die!
How dies the serpent? he hath eat'n and lives,
And knows, and speaks, and reasons, and discerns,

Irrational till then. For us alone
Was death invented? or to us deny'd
This intellectual food, for beasts reserv'd?
For beasts it seems: yet that one beast which first
Hath tasted, envies not, but brings with joy
The good befall'n him, author unsuspect,
Friendly to man, far from deceit or guile.
What fear I then? rather what know to fear
Under this ignorance of good and evil,
Of God or death, of law or penalty?
Here grows the cure of all, this fruit divine,
Fair to the eye, inviting to the taste,
Of virtue to make wise: what hinders then
To reach, and feed at once both body' and mind?
So saying, her rash hand, in evil hour,
Forth reaching to the fruit, she pluck'd, she eat:
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
That all was lost. Back to the thicket slunk
The guilty serpent, and well might; for Eve
Intent now wholly on her taste, nought else
Regarded, such delight till then, as seem'd,
In fruit she never tasted, whether true
Or fancy'd so, through expectation high
Of knowledge; nor was God-head from her thought.
Greedily she ingorg'd without restraint,
And knew not, eating death; satiate at length,
And heighten'd as with wine, jocund and boon,
Thus to herself she pleasingly began:
O sov'reign, virtuous, precious of all trees
In Paradise, of operation bless'd
To sapience, hitherto obscur'd, infam'd,
And thy fair fruit let hang, as to no end
Created; but henceforth my early care,
Not without song, each morning, and due praise,
Shall tend thee, and the fertile burden ease
Of thy full branches offer'd free to all;
Till dieted by thee I grow mature
In knowledge, as the gods, who all things know;
Tho' others envy what they cannot give;
For had the gift been theirs, it had not here
Thus grown. Experience, next to thee, I owe,

Best guide; not following thee, I had remain'd
In ignorance; thou open'st wisdom's way,
And giv'st access, tho' secret she retire,
And I perhaps am secret; Heav'n is high,
High, and remote to see from thence distinct
Each thing on Earth: and other care perhaps
May have diverted from continual watch
Our great Forbidder, safe with all his spies
About him. But to Adam in what sort
Shall I appear? shall I to him make known
As yet my change, and give him to partake
Full happiness with me, or rather not,
But keep the odds of knowledge in my power
Without copartner? so to add what wants
In female sex, the more to draw his love,
And render me more equal, and perhaps,
A thing not undesirable, sometime
Superior; for inferior who is free;
This may be well: but what if God have seen,
And death ensue? then I shall be no more,
And Adam wedded to another Eve,
Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct;
A death to think. Confirm'd then I resolve,
Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe:
So dear I love him, that with him all deaths
I could endure, without him live no life.
  So saying, from the tree her step she turn'd;
But first low reverence done, as to the power
That dwelt within, whose presence had infus'd
Into the plant sciential sap, deriv'd
From nectar, drink of gods. Adam the while,
Waiting desirous her return, had wove
Of choicest flowers a garland to adorn
Her tresses, and her rural labours crown,
As reapers oft are wont their harvest queen.
Great joy he promis'd to his thoughts, and new
Solace in her return, so long delay'd;
Yet oft his heart, divine of something ill,
Misgave him; he the falt'ring measure felt
And forth to meet her went, the way she took
That morn when first they parted; by the tree
Of knowledge he must pass; there he her met,

Scarce from the tree returning; in her hand
A bough of fairest fruit, that downy smil'd,
New gather'd, and ambrosial smell diffus'd.
To him she hasted; in her face excuse
Came prologue, and apology too prompt,
Which with bland words at will she thus address'd:
Hast thou not wonder'd, Adam, at my stay?
Thee I have miss'd, and thought it long, depriv'd
Thy presence, agony of love till now
Not felt, nor shall be twice; for never more
Mean I to try, what rash untry'd I sought,
The pain of absence from thy sight. But strange
Hath been the cause, and wonderful to hear:
This tree is not as we are told, a tree
Of danger tasted, nor to evil unknown
Opening the way, but of divine effect
To open eyes, and make them gods who taste;
And hath been tasted such; the serpent wise,
Or not restrain'd as we, or not obeying,
Hath eaten of the fruit, and is become,
Not dead, as we are threaten'd, but thenceforth
Indued with human voice and human sense,
Reasoning to admiration, and with me
Persuasively hath so prevail'd, that I
Have also tasted, and have also found
Th' effects to correspond: opener mine eyes,
Dim erst; dilated spirits, ampler heart,
And growing up to Godhead; which for thee
Chiefly I sought, without thee can despise.
For bliss, as thou hast part, to me is bliss;
Tedious, unshar'd with thee, and odious soon.
Thou therefore also taste, that equal lot
May join us, equal joy, as equal love;
Lest thou not tasting, different degree
Disjoin us, and I then too late renounce
Deity for thee, when fate will not permit.
Thus Eve with count'nance blithe her story told;
But in her cheek distemper flushing glow'd.
On the other side, Adam, soon as he heard
The fatal trespass done by Eve, amaz'd,
Astonied stood and blank, while horror chill
Ran through his veins, and all his joints relax'd;

From his slack hand the garland wreath'd for Eve
Down dropt, and all the faded roses shed:
Speechless he stood and pale, till thus at length
First to himself he inward silence broke:
O fairest of Creation, last and best
Of all God's works, creature in whom excell'd
Whatever can to sight or thought be form'd,
Holy, divine, good, amiable, or sweet!
How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost,
Defac'd, deflower'd, and now to death devote!
Rather how hast thou yielded to transgress
The strict forbiddance, how to violate
The sacred fruit forbidd'n? some cursed fraud
Of enemy hath beguil'd thee, yet unknown,
And me with thee hath ruin'd, for with thee
Certain my resolution is to die;
How can I live without thee, how forego
Thy sweet converse, and love so dearly join'd,
To live again in these wild woods forlorn?
Should God create another Eve, and I
Another rib afford, yet loss of thee
Would never from my heart; no, no, I feel
The link of nature draw me: flesh of flesh,
Bone of my bone thou art, and from thy state
Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe.
So having said, as one from sad dismay
Recomforted, and after thoughts disturb'd
Submitting to what seem'd remediless,
Thus in calm mood his words to Eve he turn'd:
Bold deed thou hast presum'd, advent'rous Eve,
And peril great provok'd, who thus hath dar'd,
Had it been only coveting to eye
That sacred fruit: sacred to abstinence,
Much more to taste it, under ban to touch.
But past who can recal, or done undo?
Not God omnipotent, nor Fate; yet so
Perhaps thou shalt not die, perhaps the fact
Is not so heinous now, foretasted fruit,
Profan'd first by the serpent, by him first
Made common and unhallow'd ere our taste;
Nor yet on him found deadly, he yet lives,
Lives as thou saidst, and gains to live as man

Higher degree of life, inducement strong
To us, as likely tasting to attain
Proportional ascent, which cannot be
But to be gods, or angels demi-gods.
Nor can I think that God, Creator wise,
Though threat'ning, will in earnest so destroy
Us his prime creatures, dignify'd so high,
Set over all his works, which in our fall,
For us created, needs with us must fail,
Dependent made; so God shall uncreate,
Be frustrate, do, undo, and labour lose;
Not well conceiv'd of God, who though his power
Creation could repeat, yet would be loath
Us to abolish, lest the Adversary
Triumph and say; fickle their state whom God
Most favours; who can please him long? Me first
He ruin'd, now mankind; whom will he next?
Matter of scorn, not to be given the foe.
However, I with thee have fix'd my lot,
Certain to undergo like doom; if death
Consort with thee, death is to me as life;
So forcible within my heart I feel
The bond of Nature draw me to my own:
My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;
Our state cannot be sever'd, we are one,
One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself.
  So Adam; and thus Eve to him reply'd:
O glorious trial of exceeding love,
Illustrious evidence, example high!
Engaging me to emulate, but short
Of thy perfection, how shall I attain,
Adam? from whose dear side I boast me sprung,
And gladly of our union hear thee speak,
One heart, one soul in both; whereof good proof
This day affords, declaring thee resolv'd,
Rather than death or aught than death more dread
Shall separate us, link'd in love so dear,
To undergo with me one guilt, one crime,
If any be, of tasting this fair fruit,
Whose virtue (for of good still good proceeds,
Direct, or by occasion) hath presented
This happy trial of thy love, which else

So eminently never had been known.
Were it I thought death menac'd would ensue
This my attempt, I would sustain alone
The worst, and not persuade thee; rather die
Deserted, than oblige thee with a fact
Pernicious to thy peace, chiefly assur'd
Remarkably so late of thy so true,
So faithful love unequal'd; but I feel
Far otherwise th' event, not death, but life
Augmented, open'd eyes, new hopes, new joys;
Taste so divine, that what of sweet before
Hath touch'd my sense, flat seems to this, and harsh.
On my experience, Adam, freely taste,
And fear of death deliver to the winds.
So saying, she embrac'd him, and for joy
Tenderly wept, much won that he his love
Had so ennobled, as of choice to incur
Divine displeasure for her sake, or death.
In recompense (for such compliance bad
Such recompense best merits) from the bough
She gave him of that fair enticing fruit
With liberal hand: he scrupled not to eat
Against his better knowledge; not deceiv'd,
But fondly overcome with female charm.
Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan,
Sky lour'd, and, mutt'ring thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completing of the mortal sin
Original; while Adam took no thought,
Eating his fill, nor Eve to iterate
Her former trespass fear'd, the more to sooth
Him with her lov'd society, that now
As with new wine intoxicated both
They swim in mirth, and fancy that they feel
Divinity within them breeding wings,
Wherewith to scorn the Earth: but that false fruit
Far other operation first display'd,
Carnal desire inflaming; he on Eve
Began to cast lascivious eyes, she him
As wantonly repaid; in lust they burn:
Till Adam thus 'gan Eve to dalliance move.
Eve, now I see thou art exact of taste,

And elegant, of sapience no small part,
Since to each meaning savor we apply,
And palate call judicious; I the praise
Yield thee, so well this day thou hast purvey'd.
Much pleasure we have lost, while we abstain'd
From this delightful fruit, nor known till now
True relish, tasting; if such pleasure be
In things to us forbidd'n, it might be wish'd,
For this one tree, had been forbidden ten.
But come, so well refresh'd, now let us play,
As meet is, after such delicious fare;
For never did thy beauty since the day
I saw thee first and wedded thee, adorn'd
With all perfections, so inflame my sense
With ardour to enjoy thee; fairer now
Than ever, bounty of this virtuous tree.
So said he; and forebore not glance or toy
Of amorous intent, well understood
Of Eve, whose eye darted contagious fire.
Her hand he seiz'd, and to a shady bank,
Thick overhead with verdant roof imbower'd,
He led her, nothing loath; flowers were the couch,
Pansies and violets, and asphodel,
And hyacinth, Earth's freshest softest lap.
There they their fill of love and love's disport
Took largely, of their mutual guilt the seal,
The solace of their sin: till dewy sleep
Oppress'd them, wearied with their amorous play.
Soon as the force of that fallacious fruit,
That with exhilarating vapour bland,
About their sp'rits had play'd, and inmost powers
Made err, was now exhal'd; and grosser sleep,
Bred of unkindly fumes, with conscious dreams
Incumber'd, now had left them; up they rose
As from unrest, and each the other viewing,
Soon found their eyes how open'd, and their minds
How darken'd! Innocence, that as a veil
Had shadow'd them from knowing ill, was gone!
Just confidence, and native righteousness,
And honour from about them, naked left
To guilty shame; he cover'd, but his robe
Uncover'd more. So rose the Danite strong

Herculean Samson, from the harlot-lap
Of Philistean Dalilah, and wak'd
Shorn of his strength: they destitute and bare
Of all their virtue! silent, and in face
Confounded, long they sat, as strucken mute:
Till Adam, though not less than Eve abash'd,
At length gave utterance to these words constrain'd:
O Eve, in evil hour thou didst give ear
To that false worm, of whomsoever taught
To counterfeit man's voice, true in our fall,
False in our promis'd rising; since our eyes
Open'd we find indeed, and find we know,
Both good and evil!—good lost, and evil got!—
Bad fruit of knowledge, if this be to know,
Which leaves us naked thus, of honour void,
Of innocence, of faith, of purity,
Our wonted ornaments now soil'd and stain'd,
And in our faces evident the signs
Of foul concupiscence; whence evil store;
Ev'n shame, the last of evils; of the first
Be sure then. How shall I behold the face
Henceforth of God or Angel, erst with joy
And rapture so oft beheld? those heav'nly shapes
Will dazzle now this earthly with their blaze
Insufferably bright. O might I here
In solitude live savage, in some glade
Obscur'd, where highest woods impenetrable
To star or sun-light, spread their umbrage broad
And brown as evening! cover me, ye pines,
Ye cedars, with innumerable boughs
Hide me, where I may never see them more!
But let us now, as in bad plight, devise
What best may for the present serve to hide
The parts of each from other, that seem most
To shame obnoxious, and unseemliest seen;
Some tree, whose broad smooth leaves together sow'd,
And girded on our loins, may cover round
Those middle parts, that this new comer Shame,
There sit not, and reproach us as unclean.
So counsel'd he, and both together went
Into the thickest wood; there soon they chose
The fig-tree, not that kind for fruit renown'd,

But such as at this day, to Indians known
In Malabar or Decan, spreads her arms
Branching so broad and long, that in the ground
The bended twigs take root, and daughters grow
About the mother tree, a pillar'd shade
High overarch'd, and echoing walks between;
There oft the Indian herdsman shunning heat
Shelters in cool, and tends his pasturing herds
At loopholes cut through thickest shade: those leaves
They gather'd, broad as Amazonian targe,
And with what skill they had, together sow'd,
To gird their waist: vain covering, if to hide
Their guilt and dreaded shame; O how unlike
To that first naked glory! Such of late
Columbus found th' American, so girt
With feather'd cincture; naked else and wild
Among the trees on isles and woody shores.
Thus fenc'd, and as they thought, their shame in part
Cover'd, but not at rest or ease of mind,
They sat them down to weep; nor only tears
Rain'd at their eyes, but high winds worse within
Began to rise, high passions, anger, hate,
Mistrust, suspicion, discord, and shook sore
Their inward state of mind, calm region once,
And full of peace, now tost and turbulent:
For understanding rul'd not, and the will
Heard not her lore, both in subjection now
To sensual appetite, who from beneath
Usurping over sov'reign reason claim'd
Superior sway: from thus distemper'd breast,
Adam, estrang'd in look and alter'd style,
Speech intermitted, thus to Eve renew'd.
Would thou hadst hearken'd to my words, and stay'd
With me, as I besought thee, when that strange
Desire of wand'ring this unhappy morn,
I know not whence, possess'd thee; we had then
Remain'd still happy, not as now, despoil'd
Of all our good, sham'd, naked, miserable.
Let none henceforth seek needless cause to approve
The faith they owe; when earnestly they seek
Such proof, conclude, they then begin to fail.
To whom, soon mov'd with touch of blame, thus Eve:

What words have pass'd thy lips, Adam severe!
Imput'st thou that to my default, or will
Of wand'ring, as thou call'st it, which who knows
But might as ill have happen'd thou being by;
Or to thyself perhaps, hadst thou been there?
Or here th' attempt, thou could'st not have discern'd
Fraud in the serpent, speaking as he spake;
No ground of enmity between us known,
Why he should mean me ill, or seek to harm?
Was I to have never parted from thy side?
As good have grown there still a lifeless rib!
Being as I am, why didst not thou, the head,
Command me absolutely not to go,
Going into such danger as thou saidst?
Too facile then thou didst not much gainsay,
Nay didst permit, approve, and fair dismiss.
Hadst thou been firm and fix'd in thy dissent,
Neither had I transgress'd nor thou with me.
To whom, then first incens'd, Adam reply'd:
Is this the love, is this the recompense
Of mine to thee, ingrateful Eve, express'd
Immutable when thou wert lost, not I,
Who might have liv'd and joy'd immortal bliss,
Yet willingly chose rather death with thee?
And am I now upbraided as the cause
Of thy transgressing? not enough severe,
It seems, in my restraint!—what could I more?
I warn'd thee, I admonish'd thee, foretold
The danger, and the lurking enemy
That lay in wait; beyond this had been force,
And force upon free-will hath here no place.
But confidence then bore thee on, secure
Either to meet no danger, or to find
Matter of glorious trial; and perhaps
I also err'd in overmuch admiring
What seem'd in thee so perfect, that I thought
No evil durst attempt thee; but I rue
That error now, which is become my crime,
And thou th' accuser. Thus it shall befal
Him who to worth in women overtrusting
Lets her will rule: restraint she will not brook,
And left to herself, if evil thence ensue,
She first his weak indulgence will accuse.

Thus they in mutual accusation spent
The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning:
And of their vain contest appear'd no end.

BOOK X.

THE ARGUMENT.

Man's transgression known, the guardian angels forsake Paradise, and return up to Heaven to approve their vigilance, and are approv'd; God declaring that the entrance of Satan could not be by them prevented. He sends his Son to judge the transgressors, who descends and gives sentence accordingly; then in pity clothes them both, and reascends. Sin and Death sitting till then at the gates of Hell, by wondrous sympathy feeling the success of Satan in this new world, and the sin by man there committed, resolve to sit no longer confin'd in Hell, but to follow Satan their sire up to the place of Man: to make the way easier from Hell to this world to and fro, they pave a broad high-way or bridge over Chaos, according to the tract that Satan first made; then preparing for Earth, they meet him proud of his success returning to Hell; their mutual gratulation. Satan arrives at Pandemonium, in full assembly relates with boasting his success against Man; instead of applause, is entertained with a general hiss by all his audience, transform'd with himself also suddenly into serpents, according to his doom given in Paradise; then deluded with a shew of the forbidden Tree springing up before them, they greedily reaching to take of the fruit, chew dust and bitter ashes. The proceedings of Sin and Death; God fortels the final victory of his Son over them, and the renewing of all things; but for the present commands his angels to make several alterations in the Heavens and elements. Adam more and more perceiving his fallen condition, heavily bewails, rejects the condolement of Eve; she persists, and at length appeases him: then, to evade the curse likely to fall on their offspring, proposes to Adam violent ways, which he approves not, but conceiving better hope, puts her in mind of the late promise made them, that her Seed should be reveng'd on the serpent, and exhorts her with him to seek peace with the offended Deity, by repentance and supplication.

MEANWHILE the heinous and despiteful act
Of Satan done in Paradise, and how

He in the serpent had perverted Eve,
Her husband she, to taste the fatal fruit,
Was known in Heav'n; for what can 'scape the eye
Of God all-seeing, or deceive his heart
Omniscient? who in all things wise and just,
Hinder'd not Satan to attempt the mind
Of Man, with strength entire, and free-will arm'd;
Complete to have discover'd and repuls'd
Whatever wiles of foe or seeming friend.
For still they knew, and ought t' have still remember'd,
The high injunction not to taste that fruit,
Whoever tempted; which they not obeying,
Incurr'd (what could they less?) the penalty:
And manifold in sin, deserv'd to fall.
  Up into Heav'n from Paradise in haste
Th' angelic guards ascended, mute and sad
For man; for of his state by this they knew;
Much wond'ring how the subtle Fiend had stol'n
Entrance unseen. Soon as the unwelcome news
From Earth arriv'd at Heaven-gate, displeas'd
All were who heard; dim sadness did not spare
That time celestial visages, yet mix'd
With pity, violated not their bliss.
About the new-arriv'd, in multitudes
Th' ethereal people ran, to hear and know
How all befel: they tow'rds the throne supreme
Accountable made haste to make appear
With righteous plea their utmost vigilance,
And easily approv'd; when the Most High
Eternal Father, from his secret cloud,
Amidst, in thunder utter'd thus his voice.
  Assembled Angels, and ye powers return'd
From unsuccessful charge, be not dismay'd,
Nor troubled at these tidings from the Earth,
Which your sincerest care could not prevent;
Foretold so lately what would come to pass,
When first this Tempter cross'd the gulf from Hell.
I told ye then he should prevail and speed
On his bad errand; man should be seduc'd
And flatter'd out of all, believing lies
Against his Maker; no decree of mine
Concurring to necessitate his fall,

Or touch with lightest moment of impulse
His free-will, to her own inclining left
In even scale. But fall'n he is, and now
What rests, but that the mortal sentence pass
On his transgression, death denounc'd that day?
Which he presumes already vain and void,
Because not yet inflicted, as he fear'd,
By some immediate stroke; but soon shall find
Forbearance no acquittance, e'er day end,
Justice shall not return as bounty scorn'd.
But whom send I to judge them? whom but thee,
Vicegerent Son? to thee I have transferr'd
All judgment, whether in Heav'n, or Earth, or Hell.
Easy it might be seen that I intend
Mercy colleague with justice, sending thee
Man's friend, his mediator, his design'd
Both ransom and redeemer voluntary,
And destin'd Man himself to judge man fall'n.
  So spake the Father, and unfolding bright
Toward the right hand his glory, on the Son
Blaz'd forth unclouded deity; he full
Resplendent all his Father manifest
Express'd, and thus divinely answer'd mild.
  Father Eternal, thine is to decree;
Mine both in Heav'n and Earth to do thy will
Supreme; that thou in me thy Son belov'd,
May'st ever rest well pleas'd. I go to judge
On Earth these thy transgressors; but thou know'st,
Whoever judg'd, the worst on me must light,
When time shall be; for so I undertook
Before thee; and, not repenting, this obtain
Of right, that I may mitigate their doom
On me deriv'd, yet I shall temper so
Justice with mercy, as may illustrate most
Them fully satisfy'd, and thee appease.
Attendance none shall need, nor train, where none
Are to behold the judgment, but the judg'd,
Those two; the third best absent is condemn'd,
Convict by flight, and rebel to all law:
Conviction to the serpent none belongs.
  Thus saying, from his radiant seat he rose
Of high collateral glory: him thrones and powers,

Princedoms, and dominations ministrant,
Accompanied to Heav'n-gate, from whence
Eden, and all the coast, in prospect lay.
Down he descended straight; the speed of gods
Time counts not, though with swiftest minutes wing'd.
Now was the sun in western cadence low
From noon, and gentle airs due at their hour
To fan the Earth now wak'd, and usher in
Th' ev'ning cool, when he, from wrath more cool,
Came the mild judge and intercessor both,
To sentence Man: the voice of God they heard,
Now walking in the garden, by soft winds
Brought to their ears, while day declin'd; they heard,
And from his presence hid themselves among
The thickest trees, both man and wife: till God
Approaching, thus to Adam call'd aloud:
  Where art thou Adam, wont with joy to meet
My coming, seen far off? I miss thee here,
Not pleas'd; thus entertain'd with solitude,
Where obvious duty e'er while appear'd unsought:
Or come I less conspicuous? or what change
Absents thee, or what chance detains? Come forth.
  He came, and with him Eve, more loath, though first
To offend; discountenanc'd both, and discompos'd;
Love was not in their looks, either to God
Or to each other; but apparent guilt,
And shame, and perturbation, and despair,
Anger, and obstinacy, and hate, and guile.
When Adam, falt'ring long, thus answer'd brief.
  I heard thee in the garden, and of thy voice
Afraid, being naked, hid myself. To whom
The gracious judge without revile, reply'd:
  My voice thou oft hast heard, and hast not fear'd,
But still rejoic'd: how is it now become
So dreadful to thee? that thou art naked, who
Hath told thee? hast thou eaten of the Tree,
Whereof I gave thee charge thou shouldst not eat?
  To whom thus Adam, sore beset, reply'd:
O Heav'n! in evil strait this day I stand
Before my Judge, either to undergo
Myself the total crime, or to accuse
My other self, the partner of my life;

Whose failing, while her faith to me remains,
I should conceal, and not expose to blame
By my complaint; but strict necessity
Subdues me, and calamitous constraint,
Lest on my head both sin, and punishment,
However insupportable, be all
Devolv'd; though should I hold my peace, yet thou
Wouldst easily detect what I conceal.
This Woman, whom thou madest to be my help,
And gav'st me as thy perfect gift, so good,
So fit, so acceptable, so divine,
That from her hand I could suspect no ill,
And what she did, whatever in itself,
Her doing seem'd to justify the deed;
She gave me of the tree, and I did eat.
To whom the Sov'reign Presence thus reply'd:
Was she thy God, that her thou didst obey
Before his voice? or was she made thy guide,
Superior, or but equal, that to her
Thou didst resign thy manhood, and the place
Wherein God set thee above her, made of thee,
And for thee, whose perfection far excell'd
Her's in all real dignity? Adorn'd
She was indeed, and lovely to attract
Thy love, not thy subjection; and her gifts
Where such as under government, well seem'd,
Unseemly to bear rule, which was thy part
And person, hadst thou known thyself aright.
So having said, he thus to Eve in few.
Say, Woman, what is this which thou hast done?
To whom sad Eve, with shame nigh overwhelm'd,
Confessing soon, yet not before her Judge
Bold or loquacious, thus abash'd reply'd:
The serpent me beguil'd, and I did eat.
Which when the Lord God heard, without delay
To judgment he proceeded on th' accus'd
Serpent though brute, unable to transfer
The guilt on him who made him instrument
Of mischief, and polluted from the end
Of his creation; justly then accurs'd,
As vitiated in nature: more to know
Concern'd not man (since he no further knew)

Nor alter'd his offence; yet God at last
To Satan first in sin his doom apply'd,
Though in mysterious terms, judg'd as then best:
And on the serpent thus his curse let fall.
Because thou hast done this, thou art accurs'd
Above all cattle, each beast of the field;
Upon thy belly groveling thou shalt go,
And dust shalt eat all the days of thy life.
Between thee and the woman I will put
Enmity, and between thine and her seed;
Her seed shall bruise thy head, thou bruise his heel.
So spake this Oracle, then verify'd
When Jesus son of Mary, second Eve,
Saw Satan fall like lightning down from Heav'n,
Prince of the Air; then rising from his grave
Spoil'd principalities and powers, triumph'd
In open shew, and with ascension bright
Captivity led captive through the air;
The realm itself of Satan long usurp'd,
Whom he shall tread at last under our feet;
Ev'n he who now foretold his fatal bruise,
And to the woman thus his sentence turn'd:
Thy sorrow I will greatly multiply
By thy conception; children thou shalt bring
In sorrow forth; and to thy husband's will
Thine shall submit; he over thee shall rule.
On Adam last thus judgment he pronounc'd.
Because thou hast hearken'd to th' voice of thy wife,
And eaten of the tree, concerning which
I charg'd thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat thereof:
Curs'd is the ground for thy sake; thou in sorrow
Shalt eat thereof all the days of thy life;
Thorns also and thistles it shall bring thee forth
Unbid; and thou shalt eat th' herb of the field.
In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread
'Till thou return unto the ground; for thou
Out of the ground wast taken; know thy birth,
For dust thou art, and shalt to dust return.
So judg'd he Man, both Judge and Saviour sent,
And th' instant stroke of death denounc'd that day
Remov'd far off; then pitying how they stood
Before him naked to the air, that now

Must suffer change, disdain'd not to begin
Thenceforth the form of servant to assume,
As when he wash'd his servants' feet, so now.
As father of his family he clad
Their nakedness with skins of beasts, or slain,
Or as the snake with youthful coat repaid;
And thought not much to clothe his enemies:
Nor he their outward only with the skins
Of beasts, but inward nakedness, much more
Opprobrious, with his robe of righteousness
Arraying, cover'd from his Father's sight.
To him with swift ascent he up return'd,
Into his blissful bosom reassum'd
In glory as of old; to him appeas'd,
All, though all-knowing, what had pass'd with man
Recounted, mixing intercession sweet.
  Meanwhile, ere thus was sinn'd and judg'd on Earth,
Within the gates of Hell sat Sin and Death,
In counterview within the gates, that now
Stood open wide, belching outrageous flame
Far into Chaos, since the Fiend pass'd through,
Sin opening, who thus now to Death began:
  O Son, why sit we here each other viewing
Idly, while Satan our great author thrives
In other worlds, and happier seat provides
For us his offspring dear? It cannot be
But that success attends him; if mishap,
E'er this he had return'd, with fury driven
By his avengers, since no place like this
Can fit his punishment, or their revenge.
Methinks I feel new strength within me rise,
Wings growing, and dominion giv'n me large
Beyond this deep; whatever draws me on,
Or sympathy, or some connatural force,
Powerful at greatest distance to unite,
With secret amity, things of like kind,
By secretest conveyance. Thou my shade
Inseparable must with me along:
For Death from Sin no power can separate.
But lest the difficulty of passing back
Stay his return, perhaps, over this gulf
Impassable, impervious, let us try,

(Adventrous work, yet to thy power and mine
Not unagreeable), to found a path
Over this main from Hell to that new world
Where Satan now prevails, a monument
Of merit high to all th' infernal host,
Easing their passage hence, for intercourse,
Of transmigration, as their lot shall lead.
Nor can I miss the way, so strongly drawn
By this new-felt attraction and instinct.
  Whom thus the meagre shadow answer'd soon:
Go whither Fate and inclination strong
Leads thee; I shall not lag behind, nor err
The way, thou leading, such a scent I draw
Of carnage, prey innumerable, and taste
The savour of death from all things there that live:
Nor shall I to the work thou enterprisest
Be wanting, but afford thee equal aid.
So saying, with delight he snuff'd the smell
Of mortal change on earth. As when a flock
Of ravenous fowl, though many a league remote,
Against the day of battle, to a field,
Where armies lie encamp'd, come flying, lur'd
With scent of living carcases design'd
For death, the following day, in bloody fight;
So scented the grim feature, and upturn'd
His nostrils wide into the murky air,
Sagacious of his quarry from so far.
Then both from out Hell gates into the waste
Wide anarchy of Chàos damp and dark
Flew diverse, and with power (their power was great)
Hovering upon the waters, what they met
Solid or slimy, as in raging sea
Tost up and down, together crouded drove
From each side shoaling tow'rds the mouth of Hell:
As when two polar winds, blowing adverse
Upon the Cronian sea, together drive
Mountains of ice, that stop th' imagin'd way
Beyond Petsora eastward, to the rich
Cathaian coast. The aggregated soil
Death with his mace petrific, cold and dry,
As with a trident smote, and fix'd as firm
As Delos floating once; the rest his look

Bound with Gorgonian rigour not to move;
And with Asphaltic slime, broad as the gate,
Deep to the roots of Hell the gather'd beach
They fasten'd, and the mole immense wrought on
Over the foaming deep high arch'd, a bridge
Of length prodigious, joining to the wall
Immoveable of this now fenceless world
Forfeit to Death; from hence a passage broad,
Smooth, easy, inoffensive, down to Hell.
So, if great things to small may be compar'd,
Xerxes, the liberty of Greece to yoke,
From Susa, his Memnonian palace high,
Came to the sea, and over Hellespont
Bridging his way, Europe with Asia join'd,
And scourg'd with many a stroke th' indignant waves.
Now had they brought the work by wond'rous art
Pontifical, a ridge of pendent rock,
Over the vex'd abyss, following the track
Of Satan to the self-same place where he
First lighted from his wing, and landed safe
From out of Chaos, to the outside bare
Of this round world: with pins of adamant
And chains they made all fast, too fast they made
And durable; and now in little space
The confines met of empyrean Heav'n
And of this world, and on the left hand Hell
With long reach interpos'd; three several ways
In sight, to each of these three places led.
And now their way to Earth they had descry'd,
To Paradise first tending, when behold
Satan in likeness of an angel bright.
Betwixt the Centaur and the Scorpion steering
His zenith, while the sun in Aries rose:
Disguis'd he came, but those his children dear
Their parent soon discern'd, though in disguise.
He after Eve seduc'd, unminded slunk
Into the wood fast by, and changing shape
To observe the sequel, saw his guileful act
By Eve, though all unweeting, seconded
Upon her husband; saw their shame that sought
Vain covertures; but when he saw descend
The Son of God to judge them, terrify'd

He fled, not hoping to escape, but shun
The present, fearing, guilty, what his wrath
Might suddenly inflict; that past, return'd
By night, and list'ning where the hapless pair
Sat in their sad discourse, and various plaint,
Thence gather'd his own doom, which understood
Not instant, but of future time, with joy
And tidings fraught, to Hell he now return'd;
And at the brink of Chaos, near the foot
Of this new wondrous pontifice, unhop'd,
Met, who to meet him came, his offspring dear.
Great joy was at their meeting, and at sight
Of that stupendous bridge his joy increas'd.
Long he admiring stood, till Sin, his fair
Inchanting daughter, thus the silence broke:
  O Parent, these are thy magnific deeds,
Thy trophies, which thou viewest as not thine own;
Thou art their author and prime Architect:
For I no sooner in my heart divin'd,
(My heart, which by a secret harmony
Still moves with thine, join'd in connection sweet,)
That thou on earth hadst prosper'd, which thy looks
Now also evidence, but straight I felt,
Though distant from thee, worlds between, yet felt
That I must after thee with this thy son,
Such fatal consequence unites us three:
Hell could no longer hold us in her bounds,
Nor this unvoyageable gulf obscure
Detain, from following thy illustrious track.
Thou hast achiev'd our liberty, confin'd
Within Hell gates till now; thou us impower'd
To fortify thus far, and overlay
With this portentous bridge the dark abyss.
Thine now is all this world; thy virtue hath won
What thy hands builded not, thy wisdom gain'd
With odds what war hath lost, and fully aveng'd
Our foil in Heav'n; here thou shalt monarch reign,
There didst not; there let him still victor sway,
As battle hath adjudg'd, from this new world
Retiring, by his own doom alienated,
And henceforth monarchy with thee divide
Of all things, parted by th' empyreal bounds,

His quadrature, from thy orbicular world,
Or try thee, now more dang'rous to his throne.
Whom thus the Prince of Darkness answer'd glad:
Fair daughter, and thou son and grandchild both,
High proof ye now have giv'n to be the race
Of Satan, (for I glory in the name,
Antagonist of Heav'n's almighty King)
Amply have merited of me, of all
Th' infernal empire, that so near Heav'n's door
Triumphal with triumphal act have met,
Mine with this glorious work, and made one realm
Hell and this world, one realm, one continent
Of easy thoroughfare. Therefore while I
Descend through darkness, on your road with ease,
To my associate powers, them to acquaint
With these successes, and with them rejoice,
You two this way, among these numerous orbs,
All yours, right down to Paradise descend;
There dwell and reign in bliss, thence on the earth
Dominion exercise, and in the air,
Chiefly on man, sole lord of all declar'd:
Him first make sure your thrall, and lastly kill.
My substitutes I send ye, and create
Plenipotent on earth, of matchless might
Issuing from me: on your joint vigour now
My hold of this new kingdom all depends;
Through sin to death expos'd by my exploit.
If your joint power prevail, th' affairs of Hell
No detriment need fear; go and be strong.
So saying, he dismiss'd them; they with speed
Their course through thickest constellations held,
Spreading their bane; the blasted stars look'd wan,
And planets, planet-struck, real eclipse
Then suffer'd. The other way Satan went down
The causey to Hell gate; on either side
Disparted Chaos over-built exclaim'd,
And with rebounding surge the bars assail'd
That scorn'd his indignation: through the gate,
Wide open and unguarded, Satan pass'd,
And all about found desolate; for those
Appointed to sit there had left their charge,
Flown to the upper world; the rest were all

Far to th' inland retir'd, about the walls
Of Pandemonium, city and proud seat
Of Lucifer, so by allusion call'd
Of that bright star to Satan paragon'd.
There kept their watch the legions, while the Grand
In council sat, solicitous what chance
Might intercept their emp'ror sent; so he
Departing gave command, and they observ'd.
As when the Tartar from his Russian foe
By Astracan, over the snowy plains
Retires, or Bactrian Sophi from the horns
Of Turkish crescent, leaves all waste beyond
The realm of Aladule, in his retreat
To Tauris, or Casbeen; so these the late
Heav'n-banish'd host left desert utmost Hell
Many a dark league, reduc'd in careful watch
Round their metropolis, and now expecting
Each hour their great adventurer from the search
Of foreign worlds; he through the midst unmark'd,
In shew plebeian angel militant
Of lowest order, pass'd; and from the door
Of that Plutonian hall, invisible
Ascended his high throne, which under state
Of richest texture spread, at the upper end
Was plac'd in regal lustre. Down awhile
He sat, and round about him saw unseen:
At last as from a cloud his fulgent head
And shape star-bright appear'd, or brighter, clad
With what permissive glory since his fall
Was left him, or false glitter: all amaz'd
At that so sudden blaze, the Stygian throng
Bent their aspect, and whom they wish'd beheld,
Their mighty Chief return'd: loud was the acclaim:
Forth rush'd in haste the great consulting peers,
Rais'd from the dark divan, and with like joy
Congratulant approach'd him, who with hand
Silence, and with these words attention won.
  Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,
For in possession such, not only of right,
I call ye and declare ye now, return'd
Successful beyond hope, to lead ye forth
Triumphant out of this infernal pit

Abominable, accurs'd, the house of woe,
And dungeon of our Tyrant: now possess,
As lords, a spacious world, to our native Heav'n
Little inferior, by my adventure hard
With peril great achiev'd. Long were to tell
What I have done, what suffer'd, with what pain
Voyag'd th' unreal, vast, unbounded deep
Of horrible confusion, over which
By Sin and Death a broad way now is pav'd
To expedite your glorious march; but I
Toil'd out my uncouth passage, forc'd to ride
Th' untractable abyss, plung'd in the womb
Of unoriginal Night and Chaos wild,
That jealous of their secrets fiercely oppos'd
My journey strange, with clamorous uproar
Protesting fate supreme; thence how I found
The new-created world, which fame in Heav'n
Long had foretold, a fabric wonderful,
Of absolute perfection! therein Man
Plac'd in a Paradise, by our exile
Made happy: him by fraud I have seduc'd
From his Creator, and the more to increase
Your wonder, with an apple: he thereat
Offended, worth your laughter, hath giv'n up
Both his beloved man and all his world
To Sin and Death a prey, and so to us,
Without our hazard, labour, or alarm,
To range in, and to dwell, and over man
To rule, as over all he should have rul'd.
True is, me also he hath judg'd, or rather
Me not, but the brute serpent in whose shape
Man I deceiv'd: that which to me belongs
Is enmity, which he will put between
Me and mankind; I am to bruise his heel;
His seed, (when is not set,) shall bruise my head:
A world who would not purchase with a bruise,
Or much more grievous pain? Ye have th' account
Of my performance: What remains, ye Gods,
But up and enter now into full bliss?
  So having said, awhile he stood, expecting
Their universal shout and high applause
To fill his ear: when contrary he hears

On all sides, from innumerable tongues,
A dismal universal hiss, the sound
Of public scorn; he wonder'd, but not long
Had leisure, wond'ring at himself now more;
His visage drawn he felt to sharp and spare;
His arms clung to his ribs, his legs entwining
Each other, till supplanted down he fell
A monstrous serpent on his belly prone,
Reluctant, but in vain! a greater Power
Now rul'd him, punish'd in the shape he sinn'd
According to his doom: he would have spoke,
But hiss for hiss return'd with forked tongue
To forked tongue; for now were all transform'd
Alike, to serpents all, as accessories
To his bold riot: dreadful was the din
Of hissing through the hall, thick swarming now
With complicated monsters, head and tail,
Scorpion, and asp, and amphisbæna dire,
Cerastes horn'd, Hydrus, and Elops drear,
And Dipsas (not so thick swarm'd once the soil
Bedropt with blood of Gorgon, or the isle
Ophiusa) but still greatest he i' the midst,
Now Dragon grown; larger than whom the sun
Ingender'd in the Pythian vale on slime,
Huge Python, and his power no less he seem'd
Above the rest still to retain; they all
Him follow'd issuing forth to th' open field,
Where all yet left of that revolted rout
Heav'n-fall'n, in station stood or just array,
Sublime with expectation when to see
In triumph issuing forth their glorious Chief;
They saw, but other sight instead, a croud
Of ugly serpents; horror on them fell,
And horrid sympathy; for what they saw,
They felt themselves now changing; down their arms,
Down fell both spear and shield, down they as fast,
And the dire hiss renew'd, and the dire form
Catch'd by contagion, like in punishment,
As in their crime. Thus was th' applause they meant
Turn'd to exploding hiss, triumph to shame
Cast on themselves from their own mouths. There
stood

A grove hard by, sprung up with this their change,
His will who reigns above, to aggravate
Their penance, laden with fair fruit, like that
Which grew in Paradise, the bait of Eve
Us'd by the Tempter: on that prospect strange
Their earnest eyes they fix'd, imagining
For one forbidden tree a multitude
Now ris'n, to work them further woe or shame;
Yet parch'd with scalding thirst and hunger fierce,
Tho' to delude them sent, could not abstain,
But on they roll'd in heaps, and up the trees
Climbing, sat thicker than the snaky locks
That curl'd Megæra: greedily they pluck'd
The fruitage fair to sight, like that which grew
Near that bituminous lake, where Sodom flam'd;
This more delusive, not the touch, but taste,
Deceiv'd; they fondly thinking to allay
Their appetite with gust, instead of fruit,
Chew'd bitter ashes, which th' offended taste
With spattering noise rejected: oft they' assay'd,
Hunger and thirst constraining, drug'd as oft,
With hatefullest disrelish, writh'd their jaws
With soot and cinders fill'd; so oft they fell
Into the same illusion, not as man
Whom they triumph'd, once laps'd. Thus were they plagu'd
And worn with famine, long and ceaseless hiss,
Till their lost shape, permitted, they resum'd,
Yearly enjoin'd, some say, to undergo
This annual humbling certain number'd days,
To dash their pride, and joy for man seduc'd.
However, some tradition they dispers'd
Among the Heathen of their purchase got,
And fabled how the serpent, whom they call'd
Ophion with Eurynome, the wide
Encroaching Eve perhaps, had first the rule
Of high Olympus, thence by Saturn driven
And Ops, ere yet Dictæan Jove was born.
Meanwhile in Paradise the hellish pair
Too soon arriv'd; Sin there in power before,
Once actual, now in body, and to dwell
Habitual habitant; behind her Death

Close following, pace for pace, not mounted yet
On his pale horse: to whom Sin thus began:
  Second of Satan sprung, all-conqu'ring Death,
What think'st thou of our empire now, though earn'd
With travel difficult, not better far
Than still at Hell's dark threshold to' have sat watch
Unnam'd, undreaded, and thyself half-starv'd?
  Whom thus the sin-born monster answer'd soon.
To me, who with eternal famine pine,
Alike is Hell, or Paradise, or Heav'n;
There best, where most with ravin I may meet;
Which here, though plenteous, all too little seems,
To stuff this maw, this vast unhide-bound corpse.
  To whom th' incestuous mother thus reply'd:
Thou therefore on these herbs, and fruits, and flowers
Feed first, on each beast next, and fish and fowl,
No homely morsels; and whatever thing
The scithe of time mows down, devour unspar'd;
Till I in Man residing through the race,
His thoughts, his looks, words, actions, all infect,
And season him thy last and sweetest prey.
  This said, they both betook them several ways,
Both to destroy, or unimmortal make
All kinds, and for destruction to mature
Sooner or later: which th' Almighty seeing,
From his transcendent seat the saints among,
To those bright orders utter'd thus his voice:
  See with what heat these dogs of Hell advance
To waste and havoc yonder world, which I
So fair and good created, and had still
Kept in that state, had not the folly' of man
Let in these wasteful furies, who impute
Folly to me; so doth the Prince of Hell
And his adherents, that with so much ease
I suffer them to enter, and possess
A place so heav'nly, and conniving seem
To gratify my scornful enemies,
That laugh, as if transported with some fit
Of passion, I to them had quitted all,
At random yielded up to their misrule;
And know not that I call'd, and drew them thither
My hell-hounds, to lick up the draff and filth

Which man's polluting sin with taint had shed
On what was pure, till cramm'd and gorg'd, nigh burst
With suck'd and glutted offal, at one sling
Of thy victorious arm, well-pleasing Son,
Both Sin and Death, and yawning Grave at last,
Thro' Chaos hurl'd, obstruct the mouth of Hell
For ever, and seal up his ravenous jaws.
Then Heav'n and Earth renew'd shall be made pure
To sanctity that shall receive no stain:
Till then the curse pronounc'd on both precedes.
  He ended; and the Heav'nly audience loud
Sung hallelujah, as the sound of seas,
Through multitude that sung: Just are thy ways,
Righteous are thy decrees on all thy works;
Who can extenuate thee? Next, to the Son,
Destin'd Restorer of mankind, by whom
New Heav'n and Earth shall to the ages rise,
Or down from Heav'n descend. Such was their song
While the Creator calling forth by name
His mighty Angels, gave them several charge
As sorted best with present things. The sun
Had first his precept so to move, so shine,
As might affect the earth with cold and heat
Scarce tolerable, and from the north to call
Decrepit winter, from the south to bring
Solstitial summer's heat. To the blank moon
Her office they prescrib'd, to th' other five
Their planetary motions and aspects
In sextile, square, and trine, and opposite
Of noxious efficacy, and when to join
In synod unbenign; and taught the fix'd
Their influence malignant when to shower,
Which of them rising with the sun, or falling,
Should prove tempestuous: to the winds they set
Their corners, when with bluster to confound
Sea, air, and shore, the thunder when to roll
With terror through the dark aerial hall.
Some say he bid his angels turn ascanse
The poles of earth twice ten degrees and more
From the sun's axle; they with labour push'd
Oblique the centric globe; some say the sun
Was bid turn reins from th' equinoctial road

Like distant breadth to Taurus with the seven
Atlantic Sisters, and the Spartan Twins
Up to the Tropic Crab; thence down amain
By Leo, and the Virgin, and the Scales,
As deep as Capricorn, to bring in change
Of seasons to each clime; else had the spring
Perpetual smil'd on earth with vernant flowers,
Equal in days and nights, except to those
Beyond the polar circles; to them day
Had unbenighted shone, while the low sun
To recompense his distance, in their sight
Had rounded still th' horizon, and not known
Or east or west, which had forbid the snow
From cold Estotiland, and south as far
Beneath Magellan. At that tasted fruit
The sun, as from Thyéstean banquet turn'd
His course intended; else how had the world
Inhabited, tho' sinless, more than now,
Avoided pinching cold, and scorching heat?
These changes in the Heav'ns, though slow, produc'd
Like change on sea and land, sideral blast,
Vapour, and mist, and exhalation hot,
Corrupt and pestilent: now from the north
Of Norumbega, and the Samoed shore,
Bursting their brazen dungeon, arm'd with ice
And snow, and hail, and stormy gust, and flaw,
Boreas, and Cæcias, and Argestes loud,
And Thrascias rend the woods, and seas upturn;
With adverse blast upturns them from the south
Notus and Afer, black with thund'rous clouds
From Sierra Leona; thwart of these as fierce
Forth rush the Levant and the Ponent winds
Eurus and Zephyr; with their lateral noise,
Sirrocco, and Libecchio. Thus began
Outrage from lifeless things; but Discord first,
Daughter of Sin, among the irrational,
Death introduc'd through fierce antipathy:
Beast now with beast 'gan war, and fowl with fowl,
And fish with fish; to graze the herb all leaving,
Devour'd each other; nor stood much in awe
Of man, but fled him, or with count'nance grim
Glar'd on him passing. These were from without

The growing miseries which Adam saw
Already in part, tho' hid in gloomiest shade,
To sorrow' abandon'd, but worse felt within,
And in a troubled sea of passion tost,
Thus to disburden sought with sad complaint.
  O miserable of happy! is this the end
Of this new glorious world, and me so late
The glory of that glory, who now become
Accurs'd of blessed? hide me from the face
Of God, whom to behold was then my height
Of happiness! yet well, if here would end
The misery; I deserv'd it, and would bear
My own deservings; but this will not serve;
All that I eat or drink, or shall beget,
Is propagated curse. O voice once heard
Delightfully, *Increase and multiply*,
Now death to hear! for what can I increase
Or multiply, but curses on my head?
Who of all ages to succeed, but feeling
The evil on him brought by me, will curse
My head? Ill fare our ancestor impure!
For this we may thank Adam; but his thanks
Shall be the execration; so besides
Mine own that bide upon me, all from me
Shall with a fierce reflux on me redound,
On me as on their natural centre light
Heavy, though in their place. O fleeting joys
Of Paradise, dear bought with lasting woes!
Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man, did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me, or here place
In this delicious garden? As my will
Concurr'd not to my being, it were but right
And equal to reduce me to my dust,
Desirous to resign and render back
All I receiv'd, unable to perform
Thy terms too hard, by which I was to hold
The good I sought not. To the loss of that,
Sufficient penalty, why hast thou added
The sense of endless woes? inexplicable
Thy justice seems; yet, to say truth, too late
I thus contest; then should have been refus'd

These terms whatever, when they were propos'd:
Thou didst accept them: wilt thou enjoy the good
Then cavil the conditions? and though God
Made thee without thy leave, what if thy son
Prove disobedient, and reprov'd, retort,
Wherefore didst thou beget me? I sought it not:
Wouldst thou admit for his contempt of thee
That proud excuse? yet him not thy election,
But natural necessity begot.
God made thee of choice his own, and of his own
To serve him; thy reward was of his grace,
Thy punishment then justly is at his will.
Be it so, for I submit; his doom is fair,
That dust I am, and shall to dust return.
O welcome hour whenever! why delays
His hand to execute what his decree
Fix'd on this day? why do I overlive,
Why am I mock'd with death, and lengthen'd out
To deathless pain? how gladly would I meet
Mortality my sentence, and be earth
Insensible; how glad would lay me down
As in my mother's lap? there I should rest
And sleep secure; his dreadful voice no more
Would thunder in my ears, no fear of worse
To me and to my offspring would torment me,
With cruel expectation. Yet one doubt
Pursues me still, lest all I cannot die;
Lest that pure breath of life, the sp'rit of man
Which God inspir'd, cannot together perish
With this corporeal clod; then in the grave,
Or in some other dismal place, who knows
But I shall die a living death? O thought
Horrid, if true! yet why? it was but breath
Of life that sinn'd; what dies but what had life
And sin? the body properly hath neither.
All of me then shall die: let this appease
The doubt, since human reach no further knows.
For though the Lord of all be infinite,
Is his wrath also? be it; man is not so,
But mortal doom'd. How can he exercise
Wrath without end on man whom death must end?
Can he make deathless death? that were to make

Strange contradiction, which to God himself
Impossible is held, as argument
Of weakness, not of power. Will he draw out,
For anger's sake, finite to infinite
In punish'd man, to satisfy his rigour,
Satisfy'd never? that were to extend
His sentence beyond dust and Nature's law,
By which all causes else according still
To the reception of their matter act,
Not to th' extent of their own sphere. But say,
That death be not one stroke, as I suppos'd,
Bereaving sense, but endless misery
From this day onward, which I feel begun
Both in me, and without me, and so last
To perpetuity—Ah! me, that fear
Comes thund'ring back with dreadful revolution
On my defenceless head; both death and I
Am found eternal, and incorporate both.
Nor I on my part single; in me all
Posterity stands curs'd: fair patrimony
That I must leave ye, Sons; O were I able
To waste it all myself, and leave ye none!
So disinherited, how would ye bless
Me, now your curse! Ah, why should all mankind
For one man's fault, thus guiltless be condemn'd,
If guiltless? but from me what can proceed,
But all corrupt, both mind and will deprav'd,
Not to do only, but to will the same
With me? how can they then acquitted stand
In sight of God? him, after all disputes
Forc'd I absolve: all my evasions vain,
And reasonings, though through mazes, lead me still
But to my own conviction: first and last
On me, me only, as the source and spring
Of all corruption, all the blame lights due;
So might the wrath. Fond wish! couldst thou support
That burden heavier than the earth to bear,
Than all the world much heavier, though divided
With that bad woman? thus what thou desir'st
And what thou fear'st, alike destroys all hope
Of refuge, and concludes thee miserable
Beyond all past example and future:

To Satan only like, both crime and doom.
O conscience, into what abyss of fears
And horrors hast thou driven me; out of which
I find no way, from deep to deeper plung'd!
Thus Adam to himself lamented loud
Through the still night, not now, as ere man fell,
Wholsome and cool, and mild, but with black air
Accompanied, with damps and dreadful gloom,
Which to his evil conscience represented
All things with double terror: on the ground
Outstretch'd he lay, on the cold ground, and oft
Curs'd his creation; Death as oft accus'd
Of tardy execution, since denounc'd
The day of his offence. Why comes not Death,
Said he, with one thrice acceptable stroke
To end me? shall Truth fail to keep her word,
Justice divine not hasten to be just?
But Death comes not at call; Justice divine
Mends not her slowest pace for pray'rs or cries.
O woods, O fountains, hillocks, dales and bowers,
With other echo late I taught your shades
To answer, and resound far other song!
Whom, thus afflicted when sad Eve beheld,
Desolate where she sat, approaching nigh,
Soft words to his fierce passion she assay'd:
But her with stern regard he thus repell'd.
Out of my sight, thou serpent! that name best
Befits thee with him leagu'd, thyself as false
And hateful; nothing wants, but that thy shape,
Like his, and colour serpentine, may shew
Thy inward fraud, to warn all creatures from thee
Henceforth; lest that too heav'nly form, pretended
To hellish falshood, snare them. But for thee
I had persisted happy, had not thy pride
And wand'ring vanity, when least was safe,
Rejected my forewarning, and disdain'd
Not to be trusted, longing to be seen
Though by the Devil himself, him overweening
To over-reach, but with the serpent meeting
Fool'd and beguil'd; by him thou, I by thee,
To trust thee from my side; imagin'd wise,
Constant, mature, proof against all assaults,

And understood not all was but a shew
Rather than solid virtue; all but a rib,
Crooked by Nature, bent, as now appears,
More to the part sinister, from me drawn;
Well if thrown out, as supernumerary
To my just number found. O why did God,
Creator wise, that peopled highest Heav'n
With spirits masculine, create at last
This novelty on earth, this fair defect
Of Nature, and not fill the world at once
With men as angels without feminine,
Or find some other way to generate
Mankind? this mischief had not then befall'n,
And more that shall befal: innumerable
Disturbances on earth through female snares,
And straight conjunction with this sex: for either
He never shall find out fit mate, but such
As some misfortune brings him, or mistake;
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gain'd
By a far worse; or if she love, withheld
By parents; or his happiest choice too late
Shall meet already link'd and wedlock-bound
To a fell adversary, his hate or shame:
Which infinite calamity shall cause
To human life, and household peace confound.
  He added not, and from her turn'd; but Eve
Not so repuls'd, with tears that ceas'd not flowing,
And tresses all disorder'd, at his feet
Fell humble, and embracing them, besought
His peace, and thus proceeded in her plaint:
  Forsake me not thus, Adam; witness Heav'n
What love sincere, and reverence in my heart
I bear thee, and unweeting have offended,
Unhappily deceiv'd; thy suppliant
I beg, and clasp thy knees; bereave me not,
Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,
Thy counsel in this uttermost distress,
My only strength and stay! forlorn of thee,
Whither shall I betake me, where subsist?
While yet we live, scarce one short hour, perhaps,
Between us two let there be peace, both joining,

As join'd in injuries, one enmity
Against a foe by doom express assigned us,
That cruel serpent: on me exercise not
Thy hatred for this misery befall'n,
On me already lost, me than thyself
More miserable; both have sinn'd, but thou
Against God only, I against God and thee;
And to the place of judgment will return,
There with my cries importune Heav'n, that all
The sentence from thy head remov'd may light
On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,
Me, me only, just object of his ire.
  She ended weeping; and her lowly plight,
Immoveable till peace obtain'd from fault
Acknowledg'd and deplor'd, in Adam wrought
Commiseration; soon his heart relented
Tow'rds her, his life so late and sole delight,
Now at his feet submissive in distress!
Creature so fair his reconcilement seeking,
His counsel, whom she had displeas'd, his aid;
As one disarm'd, his anger all he lost,
And thus with peaceful words uprais'd her soon:
  Unwary, and too desirous, as before,
So now of what thou know'st not, thou desir'st
The punishment all on thyself; alas,
Bear thine own first, ill able to sustain
His full wrath, whose thou feel'st as yet least part,
And my displeasure bear'st so ill. If prayers
Could alter high decrees, I to that place
Would speed before thee, and be louder heard,
That on my head all might be visited;
Thy frailty and infirmer sex forgiven,
To me committed and by me expos'd.
But rise; let us no more contend, nor blame
Each other, blam'd enough elsewhere, but strive
In offices of love how we may lighten
Each other's burden in our share of woe;
Since this day's death denounc'd, if aught I see,
Will prove no sudden, but a slow-pac'd evil,
A long day's dying to augment our pain,
And to our seed (O hapless seed!) deriv'd.
  To whom thus Eve, recovering heart, reply'd:

Adam, by sad experiment I know
How little weight my words with thee can find,
Found so erroneous, thence, by just event,
Found so unfortunate; nevertheless,
Restor'd by thee, vile as I am, to place
Of new acceptance, hopeful to regain
Thy love, the sole contentment of my heart,
Living or dying, from thee I will not hide
What thoughts in my unquiet breast are risen,
Tending to some relief of our extremes,
Or end; though sharp and sad, yet tolerable,
As in our evils, and of easier choice.
If care of our descent perplex us most,
Which must be born to certain woe, devour'd
By Death at last; and miserable it is
To be to others cause of misery,
Our own begotten, and of our loins to bring
Into this cursed world a woeful race,
That after wretched life must be at last,
Food for so foul a monster; in thy power
It lies, yet ere conception, to prevent
The race unblest, to being yet unbegot.
Childless thou art, childless remain: so Death
Shall be deceiv'd his glut, and with us two
Be forc'd to satisfy his ravenous maw.
But if thou judge it hard and difficult,
Conversing, looking, loving, to abstain
From Love's due rites, nuptial embraces sweet,
And with desire to languish without hope,
Before the present object languishing
With like desire, which would be misery,
And torment less than none of what we dread;
Then both ourselves and seed at once to free
From what we fear for both, let us make short;
Let us seek Death, or he not found, supply
With our own hands his office on ourselves:
Why stand we longer shivering under fears,
That shew no end but death, and have the power,
Of many ways to die, the shortest choosing,
Destruction with destruction to destroy?
  She ended here, or vehement despair
Broke off the rest; so much of death her thoughts

Had entertain'd, as dy'd her cheeks with pale.
But Adam with such counsel nothing sway'd,
To better hopes his more attentive mind
Lab'ring had rais'd, and thus to Eve reply'd:
  Eve, thy contempt of life and pleasure, seems
To argue in thee something more sublime
And excellent than what thy mind contemns;
But self destruction, therefore, sought, refutes
That excellence, thought in thee, and implies,
Not thy contempt, but anguish and regret
For loss of life, and pleasure overlov'd.
Or, if thou covet death, as utmost end
Of misery, so thinking to evade
The penalty pronounc'd, doubt not but God
Hath wiselier arm'd his vengeful ire than so
To be forestall'd; much more I fear lest death
So snatch'd, will not exempt us from the pain
We are by doom to pay; rather such acts
Of contumacy will provoke the Highest
To make death in us live: then let us seek
Some safer resolution, which, methinks,
I have in view, calling to mind with heed
Part of our sentence, that thy seed shall bruise
The serpent's head; piteous amends! unless
Be meant, whom I conjecture, our grand foe,
Satan, who in the serpent hath contriv'd
Against us this deceit: to crush his head
Would be revenge indeed; which will be lost
By death brought on ourselves, or childless days
Resolv'd as thou proposest; so our foe
Shall 'scape his punishment ordain'd, and we
Instead, shall double ours upon our heads.
No more be mention'd then of violence
Against ourselves, and wilful barrenness,
That cuts us off from hope, and savours only
Rancour and pride, impatience and despite,
Reluctance against God, and his just yoke
Laid on our necks. Remember with what mild
And gracious temper he both heard and judg'd
Without wrath or reviling; we expected
Immediate dissolution, which we thought
Was meant by death that day, when lo! to thee

Pains only in child-bearing were foretold,
And bringing forth, soon recompens'd with joy,
Fruit of thy womb: on me the curse aslope
Glanc'd on the ground; with labour I must earn
My bread; what harm? Idleness had been worse;
My labour will sustain me; and lest cold
Or heat should injure us, his timely care
Hath unbesought provided, and his hands
Cloth'd us, unworthy, pitying while he judg'd;
How much more, if we pray him, will his ear
Be open, and his heart to pity incline;
And teach us further by what means to shun
The inclement seasons, rain, ice, hail, and snow?
Which now the sky, with various face, begins
To shew us in this mountain, while the winds
Blow moist and keen, shattering the graceful locks
Of these fair spreading trees; which bids us seek
Some better shroud, some better warmth to cherish
Our limbs benum'd, e'er this diurnal star
Leave cold the night, how we his gather'd beams
Reflected, may with matter sere foment,
Or by collision of two bodies grind
The air attrite to fire, as late the clouds
Justling, or push'd with winds rude in their shock,
Tine the slant lightning, whose thwart flame driven down
Kindles the gummy bark of fir and pine,
And sends a comfortable heat from far,
Which might supply the sun: such fire to use,
And what may else be remedy or cure
To evils which our own misdeeds have wrought,
He will instruct us praying, and of grace
Beseeching him; so as we need not fear
To pass commodiously this life, sustain'd
By him with many comforts, till we end
In dust, our final rest and native home.
What better can we do, than to the place
Repairing where he judg'd us, prostrate fall
Before him reverent, and there confess
Humbly our faults, and pardon beg, with tears
Watering the ground, and with our sighs the air
Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign

Of sorrow, unfeign'd, and humiliation meek?
Undoubtedly he will relent, and turn
From his displeasure; in whose look serene,
When angry most he seem'd and most severe,
What else but favour, grace, and mercy shone?
So spake our Father penitent, nor Eve
Felt less remorse; they forthwith to the place
Repairing where he judg'd them, prostrate fell
Before him reverent, and both confess'd
Humbly their faults, and pardon begg'd; with tears
Watering the ground, and with their sighs the air
Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign
Of sorrow unfeign'd, and humiliation meek.

BOOK XI.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Son of God presents to his Father the prayers of our First Parents now repenting, and intercedes for them: God accepts them, but declares that they must no longer abide in Paradise; sends Michael with a band of Cherubim to dispossess them; but first to reveal to Adam future things: Michael's coming down. Adam shews to Eve certain ominous signs; he discerns Michael's approach; goes out to meet him: the Angel denounces their departure. Eve's lamentation. Adam pleads; but submits: the Angel leads him up to a high hill; sets before him in vision what shall happen till the flood.

Thus they in lowliest plight repentant stood
Praying; for from the mercy-seat above
Prevenient grace descending had remov'd
The stony from their hearts, and made new flesh
Regenerate grow instead; that sighs now breath'd
Unutterable, which the sp'rit of prayer
Inspir'd, and wing'd for Heav'n with speedier flight
Than loudest oratory; yet their port
Not of mean suitors, nor important less
Seem'd their petition, than when th' ancient pair
In fables old, less ancient yet than these,

Deucalion and chaste Pyrrha, to restore
The race of mankind drown'd, before the shrine
Of Themis stood devout. To Heav'n their pray'rs
Flew up, nor miss'd the way, by envious winds
Blown vagabond, or frustrate: in they pass'd
Dimensionless thro' heav'nly doors; then clad
With incense, where the golden altar fum'd,
By their great Intercessor, came in sight
Before the Father's throne: them the glad Son
Presenting, thus to intercede began:
  See, Father, what first fruits on earth are sprung
From thy implanted grace in man, these sighs
And pray'rs, which in this golden censer, mix'd
With incense, I, thy Priest, before thee bring:
Fruits of more pleasing savour from thy seed
Sown with contrition in his heart, than those
Which, his own hand manuring, all the trees
Of Paradise could have produc'd, e'er fall'n
From innocence. Now therefore bend thine ear
To supplication, hear his sighs, tho' mute;
Unskilful with what words to pray, let me
Interpret for him, me his advocate,
And propitiation; all his works on me,
Good or not good, ingraft; my merit, those
Shall perfect, and for these my death shall pay.
Accept me, and in me from these receive
The smell of peace tow'rd mankind; let him live
Before thee reconcil'd, at least his days
Number'd, though sad, till death, his doom, (which I
To mitigate thus plead, not to reverse)
To better life shall yield him, where, with me,
All my redeem'd may dwell in joy and bliss,
Made one with me, as I with thee am one.
  To whom the Father, without cloud, serene:
All thy request for man, accepted Son,
Obtain; all thy request was my decree:
But longer in that Paradise to dwell,
The law I gave to Nature him forbids:
Those pure immortal elements that know
No gross, no inharmonious mixture foul,
Eject him tainted now, and purge him off
As a distemper gross, to air as gross,

And mortal food; as may dispose him best
For dissolution wrought by sin, that first
Distemper'd all things, and of incorrupt
Corrupted. I at first with two fair gifts
Created him endow'd, with happiness
And immortality: that fondly lost,
This other serv'd but to eternize woe,
Till I provided death; so death becomes
His final remedy, and after life
Try'd in sharp tribulation, and refin'd
By faith and faithful works, to second life,
Wak'd in the renovation of the just,
Resigns him up with Heav'n and Earth renew'd.
But let us call to synod all the blest
Through Heav'n's wide bounds; from them I will not hide
My judgments, how with mankind I proceed,
As how with peccant angels late they saw,
And in their state, though firm, stood more confirm'd.
He ended; and the Son gave signal high
To the bright minister that watch'd; he blew
His trumpet, heard in Oreb since perhaps
When God descended, and perhaps once more
To sound at general doom. Th' angelic blast
Fill'd all the regions: from their blissful bowers
Of amarantine shade, fountain, or spring,
By the waters of life, where'er they sat
In fellowships of joy, the sons of Light
Hasted, resorting to the summons high,
And took their seats; till, from his throne supreme,
Th' Almighty thus pronounc'd his sov'reign will.
O Sons, like one of us Man is become
To know both good and evil, since his taste
Of that defended fruit; but let him boast
His knowledge of good lost and evil got;
Happier, had it suffic'd him to have known
Good by itself, and evil not at all.
He sorrows now, repents, and prays contrite;
My motions in him; longer than they move,
His heart I know, how variable and vain
Self-left. Lest therefore now his bolder hand
Reach also of the tree of life, and eat

And live for ever, dream at least to live
For ever, to remove him I decree,
And send him from the garden forth to till
The ground whence he was taken, fitter soil.
  Michael, this my behest have thou in charge;
Take to thee from among the Cherubim
Thy choice of flaming warriors, lest the Fiend,
Or in behalf of man, or to invade
Vacant possession, some new trouble raise:
Haste thee, and from the Paradise of God,
Without remorse, drive out the sinful pair,
From hallow'd ground th' unholy, and denounce
To them and to their progeny from thence
Perpetual banishment. Yet, lest they faint
At the sad sentence rigorously urg'd;
For I behold them soften'd, and with tears
Bewailing their excess, all terror hide.
If patiently thy bidding they obey,
Dismiss them not disconsolate; reveal
To Adam what shall come in future days,
As I shall thee enlighten; intermix
My cov'nant in the Woman's seed renew'd;
So send them forth, tho' sorrowing, yet in peace:
And on the east side of the garden place,
Where entrance up from Eden easiest climbs,
Cherubic watch, and of a sword the flame
Wide-waving, all approach far off to fright,
And guard all passage to the Tree of Life:
Lest Paradise a receptacle prove
To spirits foul, and all my trees their prey,
With whose stol'n fruit Man once more to delude.
  He ceas'd; and th' arch-angelic Pow'r, prepar'd
For swift descent; with him the cohort bright
Of watchful Cherubim; four faces each
Had like a double Janus, all their shape
Spangled with eyes more numerous than those
Of Argus, and more wakeful than to drouse,
Charm'd with Arcadian pipe, the past'ral reed
Of Hermes, or his opiate rod. Meanwhile
To re-salute the world with sacred light
Leucothea wak'd, and with fresh dews imbalm'd
The earth, when Adam, and first matron Eve,

Had ended now their orisons, and found
Strength added from above, new hope to spring
Out of despair, joy, but with fear yet link'd;
Which thus to Eve his welcome words renew'd:
Eve, easily may faith admit, that all
The good which we enjoy from Heav'n descends;
But that from us aught should ascend to Heaven
So prevalent as to concern the mind
Of God high-blest, or to incline his will,
Hard to belief may seem; yet this will prayer,
Or one short sigh of human breath, upborne
Ev'n to the seat of God. For since I sought
By pray'r th' offended Deity to' appease,
Kneel'd and before him humbl'd all my heart,
Methought I saw him placable and mild,
Bending his ear; persuasion in me grew
That I was heard with favour; peace return'd
Home to my breast, and to my memory
His promise, that thy seed shall bruise our foe;
Which then not minded in dismay, yet now
Assures me that the bitterness of death
Is past, and we shall live. Whence hail to thee,
Eve, rightly call'd Mother of all Mankind,
Mother of all things living, since by thee
Man is to live, and all things live for man.
To whom thus Eve, with sad demeanor meek:
Ill worthy I such title should belong
To me transgressor, who for thee ordain'd
A help, became thy snare; to me reproach
Rather belongs, distrust and all dispraise:
But infinite in pardon was my Judge,
That I who first brought death on all, am grac'd
The source of life; next favourable thou,
Who highly thus t' entitle me vouchsaf'st,
Far other name deserving. But the field
To labour calls us, now with sweat impos'd,
Tho' after sleepless night; for see thee morn,
All unconcern'd with our unrest, begins
Her rosy progress smiling; let us forth;
I never from thy side henceforth to stray,
Where'er our day's work lies, though now enjoin'd
Laborious, till day droop; while here we dwell,

What can be toilsome in these pleasant walks?
Here let us live, tho' in fall'n state, content.
So spake, so wish'd much humbled Eve, but Fate
Subscrib'd not; Nature first gave signs, impress'd
On bird, beast, air, air suddenly eclips'd
After short blush of Morn; nigh in her sight
The bird of Jove stoop'd from his airy tour,
Two birds of gayest plume before him drove;
Down from a hill the beast that reigns in woods,
First hunter then, pursu'd a gentle brace,
Goodliest of all the forest, hart and hind;
Direct to th' eastern gate was bent their flight.
Adam observ'd, and with his eye the chace
Pursuing, not unmov'd, to Eve thus spake:
O Eve, some further change awaits us nigh,
Which Heav'n by these mute signs in Nature shews,
Forerunners of his purpose, or to warn
Us haply too secure of our discharge
From penalty, because from death releas'd
Some days; how long, and what till then our life
Who knows, or more than this, that we are dust,
And thither must return, and be no more?
Why else this double object in our sight
Of flight pursu'd in th' air, and o'er the ground,
One way the self-same hour? why in the east
Darkness e'er day's mid-course, and morning-light
More orient in yon western cloud that draws
O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
And slow descends, with something heav'nly fraught?
He err'd not; for by this the heav'nly bands
Down from a sky of jasper lighted now
In Paradise, and on a hill made halt:
A glorious apparition, had not doubt
And carnal fear that day dimm'd Adam's eye.
Not that more glorious, when the angels met
Jacob in Machanaim, where he saw
The field pavilion'd with his guardians bright;
Nor that which on the flaming mount appear'd
In Dothan, cover'd with a camp of fire,
Against the Syrian king, who, to surprise
One man, assassin-like had levied war,
War unproclaim'd. The princely Hierarch

In their bright stand there left his pow'rs to seize
Possession of the garden; he alone,
To find where Adam shelter'd took his way,
Not unperceiv'd of Adam, who to Eve,
While the great visitant approach'd, thus spake:
Eve, now expect great tidings, which perhaps
Of us will soon determine, or impose
New laws to be observ'd; for I descry
From yonder blazing cloud that veils the hill,
One of the heav'nly host, and by his gait
None of the meanest; some great potentate
Or of the thrones above, such majesty
Invests him coming; yet not terrible,
That I should fear, nor sociably mild,
As Raphael, that I should much confide,
But solemn and sublime, whom not t' offend,
With reverence I must meet, and thou retire.
He ended; and th' Arch-angel soon drew nigh,
Not in his shape celestial, but as man
Clad to meet man; over his lucid arms
A military vest of purple flow'd
Livelier than Melibœan, or the grain
Of Sarra, worn by kings and heroes old
In time of truce; Iris had dipt the woof,
His starry helm unbuckled shew'd him prime
In manhood, where youth ended; by his side
As in a glist'ring zodiac, hung the sword,
Satan's dire dread, and in his hand the spear.
Adam bow'd low; he kingly from his state
Inclin'd not; but his coming thus declar'd:
Adam, Heav'n's high behest no preface needs:
Sufficient that thy pray'rs are heard, and Death,
Then due by sentence when thou didst transgress,
Defeated of his seizure many days
Giv'n thee of grace, wherein thou may'st repent,
And one bad act with many deeds well done
May'st cover; well may then thy Lord appeas'd
Redeem thee quite from Death's rapacious claim;
But longer in this Paradise to dwell
Permits not; to remove thee I am come,
And send thee from the garden forth to till
The ground whence thou wast taken, fitter soil.

He added not, for Adam at the news
Heart-struck with chilling gripe of sorrow stood,
That all his senses bound; Eve, who unseen
Yet all had heard, with audible lament
Discover'd soon the place of her retire.
O unexpected stroke, worse than of death!
Must I thus leave thee, Paradise? thus leave
Thee, native soil, these happy walks and shades,
Fit haunt of gods? where I had hope to spend,
Quiet, though sad, the respite of that day
That must be mortal to us both. O flowers,
That never will in other climate grow,
My early visitation, and my last
At even, which I bred up with tender hand
From the first opening bud, and gave ye names,
Who now shall rear ye to the sun, or rank
Your tribes, and water from th' ambrosial fount?
Thee lastly, nuptial bow'r, by me adorn'd
With what to sight or smell was sweet, from thee
How shall I part, and whither wander down
Into a lower world, to this obscure
And wild? how shall we breathe in other air
Less pure, accustom'd to immortal fruits?
Whom thus the angel interrupted mild:
Lament not Eve, but patiently resign
What justly thou hast lost; nor set thy heart,
Thus over-fond, on that which is not thine;
Thy going is not lonely; with thee goes
Thy husband; him to follow thou art bound;
Where he abides, think there thy native soil.
Adam, by this from the cold sudden damp
Recovering, and his scatter'd sp'rits return'd,
To Michael thus his humble words address'd:
Celestial, whether among the thrones, or nam'd
Of them the highest; for such of shape may seem
Prince above princes, gently hast thou told
Thy message, which might else in telling wound,
And in performing, end us; what besides
Of sorrow, and dejection, and despair,
Our frailty can sustain, thy tidings bring,
Departure from this happy place, our sweet
Recess, and only consolation left,

Familiar to our eyes, all places else
Inhospitable appear, and desolate,
Nor knowing us, nor known; and if by pray'r
Incessant, I could hope to change the will
Of him, who all things can, I would not cease
To weary him with my assiduous cries:
But pray'r, against his absolute decree,
No more avails than breath against the wind,
Blown stifling back on him that breathes it forth:
Therefore, to his great bidding I submit.
This most afflicts me, that departing hence,
As from his face I shall be hid, depriv'd
His blessed count'nance; here, I could frequent
With worship, place by place, where he vouchsaf'd
Presence divine, and to my sons relate,
On this mount he appear'd, under this tree
Stood visible, among these pines his voice
I heard, here, with him, at this fountain talk'd:
So many grateful altars I would rear
Of grassy turf, and pile up every stone
Of lustre from the brook, in memory,
Or monument to ages, and thereon
Offer sweet-smelling gums, and fruits, and flowers.
In yonder nether world where shall I seek
His bright appearances, or footstep trace?
For though I fled him angry, yet recall'd
To life prolong'd and promis'd race, I now
Gladly behold though but his utmost skirts
Of glory, and far off his steps adore.
To whom thus Michael, with regard benign:
Adam, thou know'st Heav'n his, and all the earth,
Not this rock only; his omnipresence fills
Land, sea, and air, and every kind that lives,
Fomented by his virtual pow'r, and warm'd:
All th' earth he gave thee to possess and rule,
No despicable gift; surmise not then
His presence to these narrow bounds confin'd
Of Paradise or Eden: this had been
Perhaps thy capital seat, from whence had spread
All generations, and had hither come
From all the ends of th' earth, to celebrate
And reverence thee, their great Progenitor.

But this præeminence thou hast lost, brought down
To dwell on even ground now with thy sons:
Yet doubt not but in valley and in plain
God is as here, and will be found alike
Present, and of his presence many a sign
Still following thee, still compassing thee round
With goodness and paternal love, his face
Express, and of his steps the track divine.
Which that thou may'st believe, and be confirm'd
E'er thou from hence depart, know I am sent
To shew thee what shall come in future days
To thee and to thy offspring ; good with bad
Expect to hear, supernal grace contending
With sinfulness of men ; thereby to learn
True patience, and to temper joy with fear
And pious sorrow, equally innur'd
By moderation either state to bear,
Prosperous or adverse ; so shalt thou lead
Safest thy life, and best prepar'd endure
Thy mortal passage when it comes. Ascend
This hill ; let Eve (for I have drench'd her eyes)
Here sleep below, while thou to foresight wak'st ;
As once thou slepst, while she to life was form'd.
  To whom thus Adam gratefully reply'd.
Ascend, I follow thee, safe guide, the path
Thou lead'st me, and to the hand of Heav'n submit,
However chast'ning! to the evil turn
My obvious breast, arming to overcome
By suffering, and earn rest from labour won,
If so I may attain. So both ascend
In the visions of God : It was a hill
Of Paradise the highest, from whose top
The hemisphere of earth in clearest ken
Stretch'd out to th' amplest reach of prospect lay.
Not higher that hill, nor wider looking round,
Whereon for different cause the Tempter set
Our second Adam in the wilderness,
To shew him all Earth's kingdoms and their glory.
His eye might there command wherever stood
City of old or modern fame, the seat
Of mightiest empire, from the destin'd walls
Of Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can,

And Samarchand by Oxus, Temir's throne,
To Pekin of Sinæan kings, and thence
To Agra and Lahor of great Mogul
Down to the golden Chersonese; or where
The Persian in Ecbatan sat, or since
In Hispahan; or where the Russian Czar
In Moscow, or the Sultan in Bizance,
Turchestan-born; nor could his eye not ken
Th' empire of Negus to his utmost port
Ercoco, and the less maratime kings
Mombaza, and Quiloa, and Melind,
And Sofala, thought Ophir, to the realm
Of Congo, and Angola farthest south;
Or thence from Niger flood to Atlas mount,
The kingdoms of Almansor, Fez, and Sus,
Morocco, and Algiers, and Tremisen;
Or Europe thence, and where Rome was to sway
The world: in sp'rit perhaps he also saw
Rich Mexico, the seat of Montezume,
And Cusco, in Peru, the richer seat
Of Atabalipa, and yet unspoil'd
Guiana, whose great city Geryon's sons
Call El Dorado: but to nobler sights
Michael from Adam's eyes the film remov'd,
Which that false fruit that promis'd clearer sight
Had bred; then purg'd with euphrasy and rue
The visual nerve, for he had much to see;
And from the well of life three drops instill'd.
So deep the power of these ingredients pierc'd,
E'en to th' inmost seat of mental sight,
That Adam now enforc'd to close his eyes,
Sunk down, and all his sp'rits became entranc'd;
But him the gentle angel by the hand
Soon rais'd, and his attention thus recall'd.
  Adam, now ope thine eyes, and first behold
Th' effects which thy original crime hath wrought
In some to spring from thee, who never touch'd
Th' excepted tree, nor with the snake conspir'd,
Nor sinn'd thy sin, yet from that sin derive
Corruption to bring forth more violent deeds.
  His eyes he open'd, and beheld a field,
Part arable and tilth, whereon were sheaves

New reap'd, the other part sheep-walks and folds;
I' th' midst an altar as the land-mark stood,
Rustic, of grassy sod; thither anon
A sweaty reaper from his tillage brought
First fruits, the green ear, and the yellow sheaf,
Uncull'd, as came to hand; a shepherd next
More meek came with the firstlings of his flock,
Choicest and best; then sacrificing, laid
The inwards and their fat, with incense strew'd,
On the cleft wood, and all due rites perform'd.
His offering soon propitious fire from Heav'n
Consum'd with nimble glance, and grateful steam;
The other's not, for his was not sincere;
Whereat he inly rag'd, and as they talk'd,
Smote him into the midriff with a stone,
That beat out life; he fell, and deadly pale
Groan'd out his soul with gushing blood effus'd.
Much at the sight was Adam in his heart
Dismay'd, and thus in haste to th' angel cry'd:
  O Teacher, some great mischief hath befall'n
To that meek man, who well had sacrific'd;
Is piety thus and pure devotion paid?
  T' whom Michael thus, he also mov'd, reply'd.
These two are brethren, Adam, and to come
Out of thy loins; th' unjust the just hath slain,
For envy that his brother's offering found
From Heav'n acceptance; but the bloody fact
Will be aveng'd, and th' other's faith approv'd
Lose no reward, tho' here thou see him die,
Rolling in dust and gore. To which our Sire.
  Alas, both for the deed and for the cause!
But have I now seen death? is this the way
I must return to native dust? O sight
Of terror, foul and ugly to behold,
Horrid to think, how horrible to feel!
  To whom thus Michael. Death thou hast seen
In his first shape on man; but many shapes
Of death, and many are the ways that lead
To his grim cave, all dismal; yet to sense
More terrible at th' entrance than within.
Some, as thou saw'st, by violent stroke shall die,
By fire, flood, famine, by intemp'rance more

In meats and drinks, which on the earth shall bring
Diseases dire, of which a monstrous crew
Before thee shall appear; that thou may'st know
What misery th' inabstinence of Eve
Shall bring on men. Immediately a place
Before his eyes appear'd, sad, noisome, dark,
A lazar-house it seem'd, wherein were laid
Numbers of all diseas'd, all maladies;
Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs,
Demoniac phrenzy, moping melancholy,
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint racking rheums.
Dire was the tossing, deep the groans; Despair
Tended the sick busiest from couch to couch;
And over them triumphant Death his dart
Shook, but delay'd to strike, though oft invok'd
With vows, as their chief good, and final hope.
Sight so deform, what heart of rock could long
Dry-ey'd behold? Adam could not, but wept,
Though not of woman born; compassion quell'd
His best of man, and gave him up to tears
A space, till firmer thoughts restrain'd excess;
And scarce recovering words his plaint renew'd.
O miserable Mankind, to what fall
Degraded, to what wretched state reserv'd!
Better end here unborn! Why is life given
To be thus wrested from us? rather why
Obtruded on us thus? who if we knew
What we receive, would either not accept
Life offer'd, or soon beg to lay it down,
Glad to be so dismiss'd in peace. Can thus
Th' image of God in man created once
So goodly and erect, though faulty since,
To such unsightly sufferings be debas'd
Under inhuman pains? why should not man,
Retaining still divine similitude
In part, from such deformities be free,
And for his Maker's image sake exempt?

Their Maker's image, answer'd Michael, then
Forsook them, when themselves they vilify'd
To serve ungovern'd appetite, and took
His image whom they serv'd, a brutish vice,
Inductive mainly to the sin of Eve.
Therefore so abject in their punishment,
Disfiguring not God's likeness, but their own;
Or if his likeness by themselves defac'd,
While they pervert pure Nature's healthful rules
To loathsome sickness, worthily, since they
God's image did not reverence in themselves.
I yield it just, said Adam, and submit.
But is there yet no other way, besides
These painful passages, how we may come
To death, and mix with our connatural dust?
There is, said Michael, if thou well observe
The rule of not too much, by temp'rance taught,
In what thou eat'st and drink'st, seeking from thence
Due nourishment, not gluttonous delight,
Till many years over thy head return:
So may'st thou live, till like ripe fruit thou drop
Into thy mother's lap, or be with ease
Gather'd, not harshly pluck'd, for death mature:
This is old age; but then thou must outlive
Thy youth, thy strength, thy beauty, which will change
To wither'd weak, and grey; thy senses then
Obtuse, all taste of pleasure must forego
To what thou hast; and for the air of youth,
Hopeful and cheerful, in thy blood will reign
A melancholy damp of cold and dry
To weigh thy spirits down, and last consume
The balm of life. To whom our Ancestor:
Henceforth I fly not death, nor would prolong
Life much, bent rather how I may be quit
Fairest and easiest of this cumbrous charge,
Which I must keep till my appointed day
Of rend'ring up, and patiently attend
My dissolution. Michael reply'd.
Nor love thy life, nor hate: but what thou liv'st
Live well; how long or short permit to Heav'n:
And now prepare thee for another sight.
He look'd, and saw a spacious plain, whereon

Were tents of various hue; by some were herds
Of cattle grazing; others, whence the sound
Of instruments that made melodious chime
Was heard, of harp and organ; and who mov'd
Their stops and chords, were seen; his volant touch
Instinct through all proportions low and high
Fled and pursu'd transverse the resonant fugue.
In other part stood one, who at the forge
Lab'ring, two massy clods of ir'n and brass
Had melted, (whether found where casual fire
Had wasted woods on mountain or in vale,
Down to the veins of earth, thence gliding hot
To some cave's mouth, or whether wash'd by stream
From underground) the liquid ore he drain'd
Into fit moulds prepar'd; from which he form'd
First his own tools; then, what might else be wrought
Fusil or grav'n in metal. After these,
But on the hither side, a different sort
From the high neighbouring hills, which was their seat,
Down to the plain descended; by their guise
Just men they seem'd, and all their study bent
To worship God aright, and know his works
Not hid, nor those things last which might preserve
Freedom and peace to men: they on the plain
Long had not walk'd, when from the tents behold
A bevy of fair women, richly gay
In gems and wanton dress; to th' harp they sung
Soft amorous ditties, and in dance came on:
The men, though grave, ey'd them, and let their eyes
Rove without rein, till in the amorous net
Fast caught, they lik'd, and each his liking chose;
And now of love they treat, till th' evening star,
Love's harbinger, appear'd; then all in heat
They light the nuptial torch, and bid invoke
Hymen, then first to marriage rites invok'd:
With feast and music all the tents resound.
Such happy interview and fair event
Of love and youth not lost, songs, garlands, flowers,
And charming symphonies attach'd the heart
Of Adam, soon inclin'd t' admit delight,
The bent of Nature; which he thus express'd:
True opener of mine eyes, prime Angel blest,

Much better seems this vision, and more hope
Of peaceful days portends than those two past;
Those were of hate and death, or pain much worse;
Here Nature seems fulfill'd in all her ends.
To whom thus Michael. Judge not what is best
By pleasure, though to nature seeming meet;
Created, as thou art, to nobler end,
Holy and pure, conformity divine.
Those tents thou saw'st so pleasant, were the tents
Of Wickedness, wherein shall dwell his race
Who slew his brother; studious they appear
Of arts that polish life, inventors rare,
Unmindful of their Maker, though his spirit
Taught them; but they his gifts acknowledg'd none.
Yet they a beauteous offspring shall beget;
For that fair female troop thou saw'st, that seem'd
Of goddesses, so blithe, so smooth, so gay,
Yet empty of all good, wherein consists
Woman's domestic honour and chief praise;
Bred only and completed to the taste
Of lustful appetence, to sing, to dance,
To dress, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye,
To these, that sober race of men, whose lives
Religious titled them the sons of God,
Shall yield up all their virtue, all their fame
Ignobly, to the trains and to the smiles
Of these fair atheists, and now swim in joy,
Ere long to swim at large, and laugh; for which
The world ere long a world of tears must weep.
To which thus Adam, of short joy bereft:
O pity' and shame, that they who to live well
Enter'd so fair, should turn aside to tread
Paths indirect, or in the midway faint!
But still I see the tenor of man's woe
Holds on the same, from woman to begin.
From man's effeminate slackness it begins,
Said th' Angel, who should better hold his place
By wisdom and superior gifts receiv'd:
But now prepare thee for another scene.
He look'd, and saw wide territory spread
Before him, towns, and rural works between;
Cities of men, with lofty gates and towers,

Concourse in arms, fierce faces threat'ning wars,
Giants of mighty bone, and bold emprise;
Part wield their arms, part curb the foaming steed,
Single, or in array of battle, rang'd
Both horse and foot, nor idly must'ring stood;
One way a band select from forage drives
A herd of beeves, fair oxen and fair kine
From a fat meadow ground; or fleecy flock,
Ewes and their bleating lambs over the plain,
Their booty; scarce with life the shepherds fly,
But call in aid, which makes a bloody fray;
With cruel tournament the squadrons join;
Where cattle pastur'd late, now scatter'd lies
With carcases and arms th' insanguin'd field
Deserted: others to a city strong
Lay siege, encamp'd; by battery, scale, and mine,
Assaulting; others from the wall defend
With dart and javeline, stones and sulphurous fire:
On each hand slaughter and gigantic deeds.
In other part, the scepter'd heralds call
To council in the city gates: anon
Grey-headed men, and grave, with warriors mix'd
Assemble, and harrangues are heard, but soon
In factious opposition, till at last
Of middle age one rising, eminent
In wise deport, spake much of right and wrong,
Of justice, of religion, truth, and peace,
And judgment from above: him old and young
Exploded, and had seiz'd with violent hands,
Had not a cloud descending snatch'd him thence
Unseen amid the throng: so violence
Proceeded, and oppression, and sword-law
Thro' all the plain, and refuge none was found.
Adam was all in tears, and to his guide
Lamenting, turn'd full sad: O what are these,
Death's ministers, not men, who thus deal death
Inhumanly to men, and multiply
Ten thousandfold the sin of him who slew
His brother: for of whom such massacre
Make they but of their brethren, men of men?
But who was that just man, whom had not Heav'n
Rescued, had in his righteousness been lost?

To whom thus Michael. These are the product
Of those ill-mated marriages thou saw'st;
Where good with bad were match'd, who of themselves
Abhor to join; and by imprudence mix'd,
Produce prodigious births of body' or mind.
Such were these giants, men of high renown:
For in those days might only shall be admir'd,
And valour and heroic virtue call'd;
To'overcome in battle, and subdue
Nations, and bring home spoils with infinite
Man-slaughter, shall be held the highest pitch
Of human glory, and for glory done
Of triumph, to be stil'd great conquerors,
Patrons of mankind, gods, and sons of gods,
Destroyers rightlier call'd, and plagues of men.
Thus fame shall be achiev'd, renown on earth,
And what most merits fame, in silence hid.
But he the sev'nth from thee, whom thou beheldst
The only righteous in a world perverse,
And therefore hated, therefore so beset
With foes, for daring single to be just,
And utter odious truth, that God would come
To judge them with his saints: him the most High
Rapt in a balmy cloud, with winged steeds
Did, as thou saw'st, receive, to walk with God
High in salvation and the climes of bliss,
Exempt from death; to shew thee what reward
Awaits the good, the rest what punishment;
Which now direct thine eyes, and soon behold.
He look'd, and saw the face of things quite chang'd;
The brazen throat of war had ceas'd to roar:
All now was turn'd to jollity and game,
To luxury and riot, feast and dance,
Marrying or prostituting, (as befel,)
Rape or adultery, where passing fair
Allur'd them; thence from cups to civil broils.
At length a reverend sire among them came,
And of their doings great dislike declar'd,
And testify'd against their ways; he oft
Frequented their assemblies, whereso met,
Triumphs of festivals, and to them preach'd
Conversion and repentance, as to souls

In prison under judgments imminent:
But all in vain, which when he saw, he ceas'd
Contending, and remov'd his tents far off;
Then from the mountain hewing timber tall,
Began to build a vessel of huge bulk,
Measur'd by cubit, length, and breadth, and height,
Smear'd round with pitch, and in the side a door
Contriv'd, and of provisions laid in large
For man and beast: when lo a wonder strange!
Of every beast, and bird, and insect small
Came sev'ns, and pairs, and enter'd in, as taught
Their order: last the sire, and his three sons
With their four wives; and God made fast the door.
Meanwhile the south wind rose, and with black wings
Wide hovering, all the clouds together drove,
From under Heav'n; the hills to their supply
Vapour and exhalation, dusk and moist,
Sent up amain; and now the thicken'd sky
Like a dark ceiling stood; down rush'd the rain
Impetuous, and continued till the earth
No more was seen; the floating vessel swum
Uplifted, and secure with beaked prow
Rode tilting on the waves; all dwellings else
Flood overwhelm'd, and them with all their pomp
Deep under water roll'd, sea cover'd sea,
Sea without shore; and in their palaces
Where luxury late reign'd, sea-monsters whelp'd
And stabled: of mankind, so numerous late,
All left, in one small bottom swam embark'd.
How didst thou grieve then, Adam, to behold
The end of all thy offspring, end so sad,
Depopulation! thee another flood,
Of tears and sorrow' a flood, thee also drown'd,
And sunk thee as thy sons; till gently rear'd
By the Angel, on thy feet thou stoodst at last,
Tho' comfortless, as when a father mourns
His children, all in view destroy'd at once;
And scarce to th' Angel utter'dst thus thy plaint.
  O visions ill foreseen! better had I
Liv'd ignorant of future, so had borne
My part of evil only, each day's lot
Enough to bear; those now, that were dispens'd

The burd'n of many ages, on me light
At once, by my foreknowledge gaining birth
Abortive, to torment me ere their being,
With thought that they must be. Let no man seek
Henceforth to be foretold what shall befal
Him or his children; evil he may be sure,
Which neither his foreknowing can prevent;
And he the future evil shall no less
In apprehension than in substance feel,
Grievous to bear: but that care now is past,
Man is not whom to warn: those few escap'd
Famine and anguish will at last consume,
Wand'ring that wat'ry desert: I had hope
When violence was ceas'd, and war on earth,
All would have then gone well, peace would have crown'd
With length of happy days the race of man;
But I was far deceiv'd, for now I see
Peace to corrupt no less than war to waste.
How comes it thus? unfold, celestial Guide,
And whether here the race of man will end.
  To whom thus Michael. Those whom last thou saw'st
In triumph and luxurious wealth, are they
First seen in acts of prowess eminent
And great exploits, but of true virtue void;
Who having spilt much blood, and done much waste,
Subduing nations, and achiev'd thereby
Fame in the world, high titles, and rich prey,
Shall change their course to pleasure, ease, and sloth,
Surfeit, and lust, till wantonness and pride
Raise out of friendship hostile deeds in peace.
The conquer'd also, and enslav'd by war,
Shall with their freedom lost all virtue lose
And fear of God, from whom their piety feign'd
In sharp contest of battle found no aid
Against invaders; therefore cool'd in zeal
Thenceforth shall practise how to live secure,
Worldly or dissolute, on what their lords
Shall leave them to enjoy; for th' earth shall bear
More than enough, that temp'rance may be try'd:
So all shall turn degenerate, all deprav'd,

Justice and temp'rance, truth and faith forgot!
One man except, the only Son of Light
In a dark age, against example good,
Against allurement, custom, and a world
Offended; fearless of reproach and scorn,
Or violence, he of their wicked ways
Shall them admonish, and before them set
The paths of righteousness, how much more safe
And full of peace, denouncing wrath to come
On their impenitence; and shall return
Of them derided; but, of God observ'd,
The one just man alive; by his command
Shall build a wondrous ark, as thou beheldst,
To save himself and household from amidst
A world devote to universal wreck.
No sooner he with them of man and beast
Select for life shall in the ark be lodg'd,
And shelter'd round, but all the cataracts
Of Heav'n set open on the earth shall pour
Rain day and night; all fountains of the deep
Broke up, shall heave the ocean to usurp
Beyond all bounds, till inundation rise
Above the highest hills; then shall this mount
Of Paradise by might of waves be mov'd
Out of his place, push'd by the horned flood,
With all his verdure spoil'd, and trees adrift,
Down the great river to the op'ning gulf,
And there take root an island salt and bare,
The haunt of seals, and orcs, and sea-mews clang:
To teach thee that God attributes to place
No sanctity, if none be thither brought
By men who there frequent, or therein dwell.
And now what further shall ensue, behold.
  He look'd, and saw the ark hull on the flood,
Which now abated; for the clouds were fled,
Driv'n by a keen north-wind, that blowing dry
Wrinkled the face of deluge, as decay'd;
And the clear sun on his wide wat'ry glass
Gaz'd hot, and of the fresh wave largely drew,
As after thirst, which made their flowing shrink
From standing lake to tripping ebb, that stole
With soft foot tow'rds the deep, who now had stopt

His sluices, as the Heav'n his windows shut.
The ark no more now floats, but seems on ground
Fast on the top of some high mountain fix'd.
And now the tops of hills as rocks appear;
With clamour thence the rapid currents drive
Tow'rds the retreating sea their furious tide.
Forthwith from out the ark a raven flies,
And after him, the surer messenger,
A dove, sent forth once and again to spy
Green tree or ground whereon his foot may light;
The second time returning, in his bill
An olive leaf he brings, pacific sign:
Anon dry ground appears, and from his ark
The ancient sire descends with all his train:
Then with uplifted hands, and eyes devout,
Grateful to Heav'n, o'er his head beholds
A dewy cloud, and in the cloud a bow
Conspicuous with three listed colours gay,
Betokening peace from God, and covenant new:
Whereat the heart of Adam, erst so sad,
Greatly rejoic'd; and thus his joy broke forth:
  O thou who future things can represent
As present, heav'nly Instructor, I revive
At this last sight, assur'd that man shall live
With all the creatures, and their seed preserve.
Far less I now lament for one whole world
Of wicked sons destroy'd, than I rejoice
For one man found so perfect and so just,
That God vouchsafes to raise another world
From him, and all his anger to forget.
But say, what mean those colour'd streaks in Heav'n,
Distended as the brow of God appeas'd;
Or serve they as a flow'ry verge to bind
The fluid skirts of that same wat'ry cloud,
Lest it again dissolve and show'r the earth?
  To whom the archangel. Dext'rously thou aim'st;
So willingly doth God remit his ire,
Though late repenting him of man deprav'd,
Griev'd at his heart, when looking down he saw
The whole earth fill'd with violence, and all flesh
Corrupting each their way; yet those remov'd,
Such grace shall one just man find in his sight,

That he relents, not to blot out mankind,
And makes a covenant never to destroy
The Earth again by flood, nor let the sea
Surpass his bounds, nor rain to drown the world,
With man therein or beast; but when he brings
Over the earth a cloud, will therein set
His triple-colour'd bow, whereon to look,
And call to mind his covenant: day and night,
Seed-time and harvest, heat and hoary frost
Shall hold their course, till fire purge all things new,
Both Heav'n and Earth, wherein the just shall dwell.

BOOK XII.

THE ARGUMENT.

The angel Michael continues from the Flood to relate what shall succeed; then, in the mention of Abraham, comes by degrees to explain, who that Seed of the Woman shall be, which was promised Adam and Eve in the fall; his incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension; the state of the Church till his second coming. Adam, greatly satisfied and recomforted by these relations and promises, descends the hill with Michael; wakens Eve, who all this while had slept, but with gentle dreams composed to quietness of mind and submission. Michael, in either hand, leads them out of Paradise, the fiery sword waving behind them, and the cherubim taking their stations to guard the place.

As one who in his journey bates at noon,
Though bent on speed; so here th' arch-angel paus'd
Betwixt the world destroy'd, and world restor'd,
If Adam aught perhaps might interpose;
Then with transition sweet, new speech resumes.
  Thus thou hast seen one world begin and end;
And man, as from a second stock, proceed.
Much thou hast yet to see, but I perceive
Thy mortal sight to fail; objects divine
Must needs impair and weary human sense;
Henceforth what is to come I will relate;
Thou, therefore, give due audience, and attend.

This second source of men, while yet but few,
And while the dread of judgment past, remains
Fresh in their minds, fearing the Deity,
With some regard to what is just and right,
Shall lead their lives, and multiply apace,
Lab'ring the soil, and reaping plenteous crop,
Corn, wine, and oil; and from the herd or flock
Oft sacrificing bullock, lamb, or kid,
With large wine-offerings pour'd, and sacred feast,
Shall spend their days in joy unblam'd, and dwell
Long time in peace by families and tribes
Under paternal rule; till one shall rise
Of proud ambitious heart, who not content
With fair equality, fraternal state,
Will arrogate dominion undeserv'd
Over his brethren, and quite dispossess
Concord and law of nature, from the earth,
Hunting (and men, not beasts, shall be his game)
With war and hostile snare, such as refuse
Subjection to his empire tyrannous;
A mighty hunter thence he shall be styl'd
Before the Lord, as in despight of Heav'n,
Or from Heav'n claiming second sov'reignty;
And from rebellion shall derive his name,
Though of rebellion others he accuse.
He, with a crew, whom like ambition joins
With him, or under him to tyrannize,
Marching from Eden tow'rds the west, shall find
The plain, wherein a black bituminous gurge
Boils out from underground, the mouth of Hell;
Of brick, and of that stuff they cast to build
A city' and tower, whose top may reach to Heav'n;
And get themselves a name, lest far dispers'd
In foreign lands, their memory be lost,
Regardless whether good or evil fame.
But God, who oft descends to visit men
Unseen, and through their habitations walks
To mark their doings, them beholding soon,
Comes down to see their city, ere the tower
Obstruct Heav'n-tow'rs, and in derision sets
Upon their tongues a various sp'rit to rase
Quite out their native language, and instead,

To sow a jangling noise of words unknown;
Forthwith a hideous gabble rises loud
Among the builders; each to other calls
Not understood, till hoarse, and all in rage,
As mock'd, they storm; great laughter was in Heav'n,
And looking down, to see the hubbub strange,
And hear the din; thus was the building left
Ridiculous, and the work Confusion nam'd.
Whereto thus Adam, fatherly, displeas'd:
O execrable son, so to aspire
Above his brethren, to himself assuming
Authority usurp'd, from God not giv'n:
He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl,
Dominion absolute; that right we hold
By his donation; but man over men
He made not lord; such title to himself
Reserving, human left from human free.
But this usurper his encroachment proud
Stays not on man; to God his tow'r intends
Siege and defiance; wretched man! what food
Will he convey up thither to sustain
Himself and his rash army, where thin air
Above the clouds will pine his entrails gross,
And famish him of breath, if not of bread?
To whom thus Michael. Justly thou abhorr'st
That son, who on the quiet state of men
Such trouble brought, affecting to subdue
Rational liberty; yet know withal,
Since thy orig'nal lapse, true liberty
Is lost, which always with right reason dwells
Twinn'd, and from her hath no dividual being:
Reason in man obscur'd, or not obey'd,
Immediately, inordinate desires,
And upstart passions catch the government
From reason, and to servitude reduce
Man, till then free. Therefore, since he permits
Within himself unworthy powers to reign
Over free reason, God, in judgment just,
Subjects it from without to violent lords;
Who oft as undeservedly inthrall
His outward freedom; tyranny must be,
Though to the tyrant thereby no excuse.

Yet, sometimes, nations will decline so low
From virtue, which is reason, that no wrong,
But justice, and some fatal curse annex'd,
Deprives them of their outward liberty,
Their inward lost: witness th' irreverent son
Of him who built the ark, who for the shame
Done to his father, heard this heavy curse,
Servant of servants, on his vicious race.
Thus will the latter, as the former world,
Still tend from bad to worse, till God at last,
Wearied with their iniquities, withdraw
His presence from among them, and avert
His holy eyes; resolving, from thenceforth,
To leave them to their own polluted ways;
And one peculiar nation to select
From all the rest, of whom to be invok'd;
A nation from one faithful man to spring:
Him, on this side Euphrates yet residing,
Bred up in idol-worship. O that men
(Canst thou believe?) should be so stupid grown,
While yet the Patriarch liv'd, who scap'd the flood,
As to forsake the living God, and fall
To worship their own work in wood and stone,
For Gods! yet him, God the most High vouchsafes
To call, by vision, from his father's house,
His kindred and false gods, into a land
Which he will shew him, and from him will raise
A mighty nation, and upon him shower
His benediction so, that in his seed
All nations shall be blest; he straight obeys,
Not knowing to what land, yet firm believes;
I see him, but thou canst not, with what faith
He leaves his gods, his friends, and native soil,
Ur of Chaldæa, passing now the ford
To Haran; after him a cumbrous train
Of herds and flocks, and numerous servitude;
Not wand'ring poor, but trusting all his wealth
With God, who call'd him, in a land unknown.
Canaan he now attains; I see his tents
Pitch'd about Sechem, and the neighb'ring plain
Of Moreh; there, by promise, he receives
Gift to his progeny of all that land,

From Hamath northward, to the desert south,
(Things by their names I call, though yet unnam'd)
From Hermon east to the great western sea;
Mount Hermon! yonder sea; each place behold
In prospect, as I point them; on the shore
Mount Carmel; here the double-founted stream
Jordan, true limit eastward; but his sons
Shall dwell to Seir, that long ridge of hills.
This ponder, that all nations of the earth
Shall in his seed be blessed; by that seed
Is meant thy great deliverer, who shall bruise
The serpent's head; whereof to thee anon
Plainlier shall be reveal'd. This patriarch blest,
Whom faithful Abraham due time shall call,
A son, and of his son a grand-child leaves,
Like him in faith, in wisdom, and renown;
The grand-child with twelve sons increas'd departs
From Canaan, to a land, hereafter call'd
Egypt, divided by the river Nile;
See where it flows, disgorging at seven mouths
Into the sea: to sojourn in that land
He comes, invited by a younger son
In time of dearth; a son, whose worthy deeds
Raise him to be the second in that realm
Of Pharaoh: there he dies, and leaves his race
Growing into a nation; and now grown
Suspected to a sequent king, who seeks
To stop their overgrowth, as inmate guests
Too numerous; whence of guests he makes them slaves
Inhospitably', and kills their infant males;
Till by two brethren (those two brethren call
Moses and Aron) sent from God to claim
His people from inthralment, they return
With glory' and spoil, back to their promis'd land.
But first the lawless tyrant, who denies
To know their God, or message to regard,
Must be compell'd, by signs and judgments dire;
To blood unshed their rivers must be turn'd;
Frogs, lice, and flies, must all his palace fill
With loath'd intrusion, and fill all the land;
His cattle, must of rot and murrain die;
Botches and blains must all his flesh emboss,

And all his people; thunder mix'd with hail,
Hail mix'd with fire, must rend th' Egyptian sky,
And wheel on th' earth, devouring where it rolls;
What it devours not, herb, or fruit, or grain,
A darksome cloud of locusts swarming down
Must eat, and on the ground leave nothing green;
Darkness must overshadow all his bounds,
Palpable darkness, and blot out three days;
Last with one midnight-stroke all the first-born
Of Egypt must lie dead. Thus with ten wounds
The river-dragon tam'd, at length, submits
To let his sojourners depart, and oft
Humbles his stubborn heart, but still as ice
More harden'd after thaw, till in his rage
Pursuing whom he late dismiss'd, the sea
Swallows him with his host, but them lets pass
As on dry land, between two crystal walls,
Aw'd by the rod of Moses so to stand
Divided, till his rescued, gain their shore:
Such wondrous power God to his saint will lend,
Though present in his angel, who shall go
Before them in a cloud, and pillar of fire;
By day a cloud, by night a pillar of fire;
To guide them in their journey, and remove
Behind them, while th' obdurate king pursues:
All night he will pursue, but his appaoach
Darkness defends between, till morning watch;
Then through the fiery pillar and the cloud
God looking forth will trouble all his host,
And craze their chariot wheels: when, by command,
Moses once more his potent rod extends
Over the sea; the sea his rod obeys;
On their embattl'd ranks the waves return,
And overwhelm their war; the race elect
Safe towards Canaan from the shore advance
Through the wild desert, not the readiest way,
Lest entering on the Canaanite alarm'd,
War terrify them inexpert, and fear
Return them back to Egypt, choosing rather
Inglorious life with servitude; for life,
To noble and ignoble, is more sweet
Untrain'd in arms, where rashness leads not on.

This also shall they gain by their delay
In the wide wilderness; there they shall found
Their government, and their great senate choose
Through the twelve Tribes, to rule by laws ordain'd:
God, from the mount of Sinai, whose grey top
Shall tremble, he, descending, will himself
In thunder, lightning, and loud trumpet's sound,
Ordain them laws; part such as appertain
To civil justice, part religious rites
Of sacrifice, informing them, by types
And shadows, of that destin'd seed to bruise
The Serpent, by what means he shall achieve
Mankind's deliverance. But the voice of God
To mortal ear is dreadful; they beseech
That Moses might report to them his will,
And terror cease; he grants what they besought,
Instructed that to God is no access
Without a Mediator, whose high office now
Moses in figure bears, to introduce
One greater, of whose day he shall foretel,
And all the Prophets in their age the times
Of great Messiah shall sing. Thus laws and rites
Establish'd, such delight hath God in men
Obedient to his will, that he vouchsafes
Among them to set up his tabernacle,
The Holy One with mortal men to dwell;
By his prescript, a sanctuary is fram'd
Of cedar, overlaid with gold; therein
An ark, and in the ark his testimony,
The records of his covenant; over these,
A mercy-seat of gold, between the wings
Of two bright cherubim; before him burn
Sev'n lamps, as in a zodiac, representing
The heav'nly fires; over the tent a cloud
Shall rest by day, a fiery gleam by night,
Save when they journey, and at length they come,
Conducted by his Angel, to the land
Promis'd to Abraham and his seed: the rest
Were long to tell, how many battles fought,
How many kings destroy'd, and kingdoms won;
Or how the sun shall in mid Heav'n stand still
A day entire, and night's due course adjourn,
Man's voice commanding—Sun! in Gibeon stand,

And thou, Moon, in the vale of Ajalon,
Till Israel overcome;—so call the third
From Abraham, son of Isaac, and from him
His whole descent, who thus shall Canaan win.
  Here Adam interpos'd. O sent from Heav'n,
Enlight'ner of my darkness, gracious things
Thou hast reveal'd; those chiefly, which concern
Just Abraham and his seed: now first I find
Mine eyes true op'ning, and my heart much eas'd,
Erewhile, perplex'd with thoughts what would become
Of me and all mankind; but now I see
His day, in whom all nations shall be blest;
Favour unmerited by me, who sought
Forbidden knowledge by forbidden means.
Yet this I apprehend not, why, to those
Among whom God will deign to dwell on earth,
So many and so various laws are given;
So many laws argue so many sins
Among them; how can God with such reside?
  To whom thus Michael. Doubt not, but that Sin
Will reign among them, as of thee begot;
And, therefore, was law giv'n them to evince
Their natural pravity, by stirring up
Sin against law to fight: that when they see
Law can discover sin, but not remove,
Save by those shadowy expiations weak,
The blood of bulls and goats, they may conclude,
Some blood more precious must be paid for man,
Just for unjust, that in such righteousness
To them by faith imputed, they may find
Justification towards God, and peace
Of conscience, which the law by ceremonies
Cannot appease, nor man the mortal part
Perform, and not performing cannot live.
So law appears imperfect, and but given
With purpose to resign them in full time
Up to a better covenant, disciplin'd
From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit,
From imposition of strict laws to free
Acceptance of large grace, from servile fear
To filial, works of law to works of faith;
And, therefore, shall not Moses, though of God

Highly belov'd, being but the minister
Of law, his people into Canaan lead;
But Joshua, whom the Gentiles Jesus call,
His name and office bearing, who shall quell
The adversary serpent, and bring back
Through the world's wilderness long wander'd man
Safe to eternal paradise of rest.
Meanwhile, they in their earthly Canaan plac'd,
Long time shall dwell and prosper; but when sins
National, interrupt their public peace,
Provoking God to raise them enemies:
From whom as oft he saves them, penitent,
By judges first, then under kings; of whom
The second, both for piety renown'd
And puissant deeds, a promise shall receive
Irrevocable, that his regal throne
For ever shall endure; the like shall sing
All prophesy, that of the royal stock
Of David (so I name this king) shall rise
A son, the woman's seed, to thee foretold,
Foretold to Abraham, as in whom shall trust
All nations, and to kings foretold, of kings
The last, for of his reign shall be no end.
But first a long succession must ensue,
And his next son, for wealth and wisdom fam'd,
The clouded ark of God, till then, in tents
Wand'ring, shall in a glorious temple' inshrine.
Such follow him as shall be register'd
Part good, part bad, of bad the longer scroll,
Whose foul adolatries, and other faults
Heap'd to the popular sum, will so incense
God, as to leave them, and expose their land,
Their city', his temple, and his holy ark,
With all his sacred things, a scorn and prey
To that proud city, whose high walls thou saw'st
Left in confusion, Babylon, thence call'd.
There, in captivity he lets them dwell
The space of sev'nty years, then brings them back,
Remembering mercy, and his covenant sworn
To David, 'stablish'd as the days of Heav'n.
Return'd from Babylon, by leave of kings
Their lords, whom God dispos'd, the house of God

They first re-edefy, and for awhile
In mean estate live moderate, till grown
In wealth and multitude, factious they grow;
But first, among the priests dissention springs,
Men who attend the altar, and should most
Endeavour peace; their strife pollution brings
Upon the temple itself: at last they seize
The sceptre, and regard not David's sons,
Then lose it to a stranger, that the true
Anointed king Messiah might be born,
Barr'd of his right; yet, at his birth, a star
Unseen before in Heav'n, proclaims him come,
And guides the eastern Sages, who inquire
His place, to offer incense, myrrh and gold;
His place of birth a solemn angel tells
To simple shepherds, keeping watch by night;
They gladly thither haste, and by a quire
Of squadron'd angels, hear his carol sung.
A virgin is his mother, but his sire
The power of the most High; he shall ascend
The throne hereditary, and bound his reign
With earth's wide bounds, his glory with the Heav'ns.
He ceas'd, discerning Adam with such joy
Surcharg'd, as had, like grief, been dew'd in tears,
Without the vent of words, which these he breath'd.
O Prophet of glad tidings, finisher
Of utmost hope! now clear I understand
What oft my steadiest thoughts have search'd in vain;
Why our great expectation should be call'd
The Seed of Woman: Virgin-Mother, hail,
High in the love of Heav'n, yet from my loins
Thou shalt proceed, and from thy womb the son
Of God most High; so God, with man unites.
Needs must the serpent now his capital bruise
Expect, with mortal pain: say, where, and when,
Their fight, what strokes shall bruise the victor's heel?
To whom thus Michael. Dream not of their fight
As of a duel, or the local wounds
Of head or heel: not, therefore, joins the Son
Manhood to Godhead, with more strength to foil
Thy enemy; nor so is overcome
Satan, whose fall from Heav'n, a deadlier bruise,
Disabled not to give thee thy death's wound;

Which he, who comes thy Saviour, shall re-cure;
Not by destroying Satan, but his works,
In thee and in thy seed: nor can this be
But by fulfilling that which thou didst want,
Obedience to the law of God, impos'd
On penalty of death, and suffering death,
The penalty to thy transgression due,
And due to theirs which out of thine will grow;
So only can high justice rest appaid.
The law of God exact he shall fulfil,
Both by obedience and by love, though love
Alone fulfil the law; thy punishment
He shall endure, by coming in the flesh
To a reproachful life and cursed death,
Proclaiming life to all who shall believe
In his redemption, and that his obedience
Imputed, becomes theirs by faith; his merits
To save them, not their own, though legal works.
For this he shall live hated, be blasphem'd,
Seiz'd on by force, judg'd, and to death condemn'd,
A shameful and accurs'd! nail'd to the cross
By his own nation, slain for bringing life;
But to the cross he nails thy enemies,
The law that is against thee, and the sins
Of all mankind, with him there crucify'd,
Never to hurt them more who rightly trust
In this his satisfaction; so he dies,
But soon revives; Death over him no power
Shall long usurp; e'er the third dawning light
Return, the stars of morn shall see him rise
Out of his grave, fresh as the dawning light,
Thy ransom paid, which man from death redeems,
His death for man, as many as offer'd life
Neglect not, and the benefit embrace
By faith, not void of works: this God-like act
Annuls thy doom, the death thou should'st have dy'd,
In sin for ever lost from life; this act
Shall bruise the head of Satan, crush his strength,
Defeating sin and death, his two main arms,
And fix far deeper in his head their stings
Than temp'ral death shall bruise the victor's heel,
Or theirs whom he redeems, a deathlike sleep,

A gentle wafting to immortal life.
Nor, after resurrection, shall he stay
Longer on earth than certain times to' appear
To his disciples, men who in his life
Still follow'd him; to them, shall leave in charge
To teach all nations what of him they learn'd,
And his salvation; them who shall believe
Baptizing in the profluent stream, the sign
Of washing them from guilt of sin to life
Pure, and in mind prepar'd, if so befal,
For death, like that which the Redeemer dy'd.
All nations they shall teach; for from that day
Not only to the sons of Abraham's loins
Salvation shall be preach'd, but to the sons
Of Abraham's faith wherever through the world;
So in his seed all nations shall be blest.
Then to the Heav'n of Heav'ns he shall ascend
With victory, triumphing through the air
Over his foes and thine; there shall surprise
The Serpent, prince of air, and drag in chains
Through all his realm, and there confounded leave:
Then enter into glory, and resume
His seat at God's right hand, exalted high
Above all names in Heav'n; and thence shall come,
When this world's dissolution shall be ripe,
With glory' and power to judge both quick and dead;
To judge th' unfaithful dead, but to reward
His faithful, and receive them into bliss,
Whether in Heav'n or Earth; for then the Earth
Shall all be Paradise, far happier place
Than this of Eden, and far happier days.
So spake th' arch-angel Michael, then paus'd,
As at the world's great period; and our sire
Replete with joy and wonder thus reply'd:
O Goodness infinite, Goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which, by creation, first brought forth,
Light out of darkness! full of doubt I stand,
Whether I should repent me now of sin
By me done and occasion'd, or rejoice
Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring:

To God more glory, more good will to men
From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.
But say, if our Deliverer up to Heav'n
Must reascend, what will betide the few
His faithful, left among th' unfaithful herd,
The enemies of truth ? who then shall guide
His people, who defend ? will they not deal
Worse with his followers than with him they dealt ?
Be sure they will, said th' angel ; but from Heav'n
He, to his own, a comforter will send,
The promise of the Father, who shall dwell
His Spirit within them, and the law of faith
Working through love, upon their hearts shall write,
To guide them in all truth, and, also, arm
With spiritual armour, able to resist
Satan's assaults, and quench his fiery darts ;
What man can do against them, not afraid,
Though to the death ; against such cruelties
With inward consolations recompens'd,
And oft supported so as shall amaze
Their proudest persecutors : for the Spirit
Pour'd first on his Apostles, whom he sends
To' evangelize the nations, then on all
Baptiz'd, shall them with wondrous gifts indue
To speak all tongues, and do all miracles,
As did their Lord before them. Thus they win
Great numbers of each nation to receive
With joy the tidings brought from Heav'n : at length
Their ministry perform'd, and race well run,
Their doctrine and their story written left,
They die ; but in their room, as they forewarn,
Wolves shall succeed for teachers, grievous wolves,
Who all the sacred mysteries of Heav'n
To their own vile advantages shall turn
Of lucre and ambition, and the truth
With superstitions and traditions taint,
Left only in those written records pure,
Though not but by the Spirit understood.
Then shall they seek to avail themselves of names,
Places, and titles, and with these to join
Secular power ; though feigning still to act
By spiritual, to themselves appropriating

The Spirit of God, promis'd alike and giv'n
To all believers; and from that pretence,
Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force
On every conscience; laws which none shall find
Left them inroll'd, or what the Spirit within
Shall on the heart engrave. What will they then,
But force the Spirit of Grace itself, and bind
His consort Liberty? what, but unbuild
His living temples, built by faith to stand,
Their own faith, not another's? for on earth
Who against faith and conscience can be heard
Infallible? yet many will presume:
Whence heavy persecution shall arise
On all, who in the worship persevere
Of spirit and truth; the rest, far greater part,
Will deem in outward rites and specious forms
Religion satisfy'd; Truth shall retire
Bestuck with sland'rous darts, and works of faith
Rarely be found: so shall the world go on,
To good malignant, to bad men benign,
Under her own weight groaning, till the day
Appear of respiration to the just,
And vengeance to the wicked, at return
Of him, so lately promis'd to thy aid,
The Woman's Seed, obscurely then foretold,
Now amplier known thy Saviour and thy Lord;
Last in the clouds from Heav'n to be reveal'd
In glory of the Father, to dissolve
Satan with his perverted world; then raise
From the conflagrant mass, purg'd and refin'd,
New Heav'ns, new Earth, ages of endless date,
Founded in righteousness and peace, and love,
To bring forth fruits, joy and eternal bliss.
He ended; and thus Adam last reply'd:
How soon hath thy prediction, Seer blest,
Measur'd this transient world, the race of time,
Till time stand fix'd? beyond is all abyss,
Eternity, whose end no eye can reach.
Greatly instructed I shall hence depart,
Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill
Of knowledge, what this vessel can contain;
Beyond which was my folly to aspire.

Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
And love with fear the only God, to walk
As in his presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend,
Merciful over all his works, with good
Still overcoming evil, and by small
Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak
Subverting worldly strong, and worldly wise
By simply meek: that suffering for truth's sake,
Is fortitude, to highest victory,
And to the faithful death the gate of life;
Taught this by his example, whom I now
Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest.
  To whom thus also th' angel last reply'd:
This having learn'd, thou hast attain'd the sum
Of wisdom; hope no higher, though all the stars
Thou knew'st by name, and all th' ethereal powers,
All secrets of the deep, all Nature's works,
Or works of God in Heav'n, air, earth, or sea,
And all the riches of this world enjoy'dst,
And all the rule, one empire; only add
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add faith,
Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,
By name to come call'd Charity, the soul
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
A Paradise within thee, happier far.
Let us descend now therefore from this top
Of speculation; for the hour precise
Exacts our parting hence; and see the guards,
By me encamp'd on yonder hill, expect
Their motion, at whose front a flaming sword,
In signal of remove, waves fiercely round;
We may no longer stay: go, waken Eve;
Her also I with gentle dreams have calm'd
Portending good, and all her spirits compos'd
To meek submission: thou, at season fit,
Let her with thee partake what thou hast heard,
Chiefly what may concern her faith to know,
The great deliverance by her seed to come
(For by the woman's seed) on all mankind:
That ye may live, which will be many days,

Both in one faith unanimous though sad,
With cause, for evils past, yet much more cheer'd
With meditation on the happy end.
He ended; and they both descend the hill:
Descended, Adam to the bower where Eve
Lay sleeping, ran before, but found her wak'd;
And thus with words not sad she him receiv'd.
Whence thou return'st, and whither went'st I know;
For God is also in sleep, and dreams advise,
Which he hath sent propitious, some great good
Presaging, since with sorrow and heart's distress
Wearied I fell asleep: but now lead on,
In me is no delay; with thee to go,
Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,
Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me
Art all things under Heav'n, all places thou,
Who for my wilful crime art banish'd hence.
This further consolation yet secure
I carry hence; though all by me is lost,
Such favour I unworthy am vouchsaf'd,
By me the promis'd Seed shall all restore.
So spake our mother Eve, and Adam heard
Well pleas'd, but answer'd not; for now too nigh
Th' arch-angel stood, and from the other hill
To their fix'd station, all in bright array
The cherubim descended; on the ground
Gliding meteorous, as evening mist
Ris'n from a river o'er the marish glides,
And gathers ground fast at the lab'rer's heel
Homeward returning. High in front advanc'd,
The brandish'd sword of God before them blaz'd
Fierce as a comet; which with torrid heat,
And vapour as the Lybian air adust,
Began to parch that temp'rate clime; whereat
In either hand the hast'ning angel caught
Our ling'ring Parents, and to the eastern gate
Led them direct, and down the cliff as fast
To the subjected plain; then disappear'd.
They looking back, all th' eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Wav'd over by that flaming brand, the gate
With dreadful faces throng'd and fiery arms:

Some natural tears they dropt, but wip'd them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
They, hand in hand, with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.

COMUS.

The first Scene discovers a Wild Wood.

The attendant Spirit *descends or enters.*

Before the starry threshold of Jove's court,
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live inspher'd
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call Earth, and with low-thoughted care
Confin'd, and pester'd in this pin-fold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives
After this mortal change to her true servants
Amongst the enthron'd gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of Eternity:
To such my errand is; and but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapors of this sin-worn mould.
But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt-flood, and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles,
That like to rich and various gems inlay

The unadorn'd bosom of the Deep,
Which he to grace his tributary gods
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,
And wield their little tridants: but this isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-hair'd deities;
And all this track that fronts the falling sun
A noble peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide
An old and haughty nation proud in arms:
Where his fair offspring nurs'd in princely lore
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-intrusted sceptre; but their way
Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wand'ring passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that by quick command from sov'reign Jove
I was dispatch'd for their defence and guard;
And listen why, for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.
  Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crush'd the sweet poison of mis-used wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transform'd,
Coasting the Tyrrhene's shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell; (Who knows not Circe
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted, lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine?)
This nymph that gaz'd upon his clust'ring locks,
With ivy berries wreath'd, and his blythe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus nam'd;
Who ripe, and frolic of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian field,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And in thick shelter of black shades imbower'd
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Offering to every weary traveller

His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drought of Phœbus, which as they taste,
(For most do taste thro' fond intemperate thirst)
Soon as the potion works, their human count'nance,
Th' express resemblance of the gods, is chang'd
Into some brutish form of wolf, or bear,
Or ounce, or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were;
And they, so perfect is their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before,
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore, when any favour'd of high Jove
Chances to pass through this advent'rous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from Heav'n to give him safe convoy,
As now I do: but first I must put off
These my sky robes, spun out of Iris woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain,
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who with his soft pipe, and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch,
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps. I must be viewless now.

COMUS *enters with a charming rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glittering; they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

COM. The star that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of Heav'n doth hold,
And the gilded car of Day,
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream,
And the slope sun his upward beam

Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the East;
Meanwhile, welcome Joy and Feast,
Midnight Shout and Revelry,
Tipsy Dance, and Jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed,
And Advice with scrupulous head,
Strict Age, and sour severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.
We that are of purer fire
Imitate the starry quire,
Who in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain brim,
The wood-nymphs deck'd with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove,
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come let us our rites begin,
'Tis only day-light that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veil'd Cotytto, t' whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame,
That ne'er art call'd, but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air,
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair.
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend
Us, thy vow'd priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out,
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice morn on the Indian steep
From her cabin'd loophole peep,

And to the tell-tale sun descry
Our conceal'd solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

THE MEASURE.

Break off, break off, I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds, within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright: some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains; I shall, ere long,
Be well stock'd with as fair a herd as graz'd
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spungy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight,
Which must not be; for that's against my course;
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-plac'd words of glozing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may, her business here.

The LADY *enters.*

This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now; methought it was the sound
Of riot, and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute, or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds,
When for their teeming flocks, and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the God amiss. I should be loath
To meet the rudeness, and swill'd insolence

Of such late wassailers; yet oh where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stept, as they said, to the next thicket side
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then, when the grey-hooded Even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weeds,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labour of my thought: 'tis likeliest
They had engag'd their wand'ring steps too far,
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me; else, O thievish Night,
Why wouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars,
That Nature hung in Heav'n, and fill'd their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud Mirth
Was rife and perfect in my list'ning ear;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And airy tongues, that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.—
O welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering Angel, girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemish'd form of Chastity;
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That he, the Supreme Good, t' whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glist'ring guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.

Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err; there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.
I cannot hallow to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture; for my new enliven'd spirits
Prompt me; and they perhaps are not far off.

SONG.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy airy shell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroider'd vale,
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well;
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
O if thou have
Hid them in some flow'ry cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of Parly, daughter of the Sphere,
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heav'n's harmonies.

COM. Can any mortal, mixture of earth's mould,
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence:
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smil'd! I have oft heard
My mother Circe, with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flow'ry-kirtled Naiades
Culling their potent herbs, and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium; Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause:

Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And in sweet madness robb'd it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen. Hail foreign wonder,
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan, or Sylvan, by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosp'rous growth of this tall wood.
  La. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise
That is address'd to unattending ears;
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my sever'd company,
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.
  Com. What chance, good Lady, hath bereft you thus?
  La. Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.
  Com. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?
  La. They left me weary on a grassy turf.
  Com. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?
  La. To seek i' th' valley some cool friendly spring.
  Com. And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady?
  La. They were but twain, and purpos'd quick return.
  Com. Perhaps forestalling Night prevented them.
  La. How easy my misfortune is to hit!
  Com. Imports their loss, besides the present need?
  La. No less than if I should my brothers lose.
  Com. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?
  La. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.
  Com. Two such I saw, what time the labour'd ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swinkt hedger at his supper sat;
I saw them under a green mantling vine
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;
Their port was more than human, as they stood;
I took it for a faëry vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,

And play i' th' plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
And as I pass'd, I worshipt; if those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to Heav'n,
To help you find them.
  La. Gentle Villager,
What readiest way would bring me to the place?
  Com. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.
  La. To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would over-task the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well practis'd feet.
  Com. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;
And if your stray-attendance be yet lodg'd,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatch'd pallet rouse; if, otherwise,
I can conduct you, Lady, to a low,
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.
  La. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was nam'd,
And yet is most pretended: in a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportion'd strength. Shepherd, lead on.

The two BROTHERS.

  E. Bro. Unmuffle ye faint Stars, and thou fair Moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benizon,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or if your influence be quite damm'd up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush candle, from the wicker hole

Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long levell'd rule of streaming light,
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.
  Y. Bro. Or if our eyes
Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks penn'd in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of past'ral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering
In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs.
But O that hapless virgin, our lost sister,
Where may she wander now, whither betake her,
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears.
What, if in wild amazement and affright,
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?
  E. Bro. Peace, Brother, be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils:
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion?
I do not think my sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in Virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would,
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired Solitude,
Where with her best nurse Contemplation
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort

Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.
He that has light within his own clear breast,
May sit i' th' centre, and enjoy bright day:
But he that hides a dark soul, and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun:
Himself is his own dungeon.
Y. Bro. 'Tis most true,
That musing Meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his grey hairs any violence?
But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon-watch, with uninchanted eye,
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunn'd heaps
Of misers' treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on Opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden, pass
Uninjur'd in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night or loneliness it recks me not;
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister.
E. Bro. I do not, Brother,
Infer, as if I thought my sister's state
Secure without all doubt, or controversy:
Yet where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate th' event, my nature is
That I incline to hope, rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint Suspicion.
My sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength
Which you remember not.
Y. Bro. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heav'n, if you mean that?
E. Bro. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,

Which if Heav'n gave it, may be term'd her own;
'Tis Chastity, my brother, Chastity:
She that has that, is clad in complete steel,
And like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharbour'd heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds,
Where, through the sacred rays of Chastity,
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer
Will dare to soil her virgin purity:
Yea there, where very desolation dwells,
By grots, and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblench'd majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption:
Some say, no evil thing that walks by night,
In fog, or fire, by lake, or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
No goblin, or swart fairy of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece,
To testify the arms of Chastity?
Hence, had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tam'd the brinded lioness,
And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Fear'd her stern frown, and she was Queen o' th' Woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield,
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin,
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace that dash'd brute violence
With sudden adoration, and blank awe?
So dear to Heav'n is saintly Chastity,
That when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lacky her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And in clear dream, and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,
Till oft converse with heav'nly habitants

Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal: but when Lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most, by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in Defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,
Ling'ring and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,
And link'd itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.
Y. Bro. How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute;
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.
E. Bro. List, list, I hear
Some far-off halloo break the silent air.
Y. Bro. Methought so too; what should it be?
E. Bro. For certain,
Either some one like us night-founder'd here,
Or else some neighbour wood-man, or at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.
Y. Bro. Heav'n keep my sister. Again, again and near;
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.
E. Bro. I'll halloo;
If he be friendly, he comes well; if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heav'n be for us.

The attendant Spirit *habited like a shepherd.*

That halloo I should know; what are you? speak;
Come not too near, you fall on iron stakes else.
Spi. What voice is that? my young Lord? speak again.
Y. Bro. O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd, sure.

E. Bro. Thyrsis? whose artful strains have oft delay'd
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweeten'd every muskrose of the dale.
How cam'st thou here, good Swain? hath any ram
Slipt from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?
How couldst thou find this dark sequester'd nook?
Spi. O my lov'd master's heir, and his next joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a stray'd ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs, is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, O my virgin Lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?
E. Bro. To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without blame,
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.
Spi. Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true.
E. Bro. What fears, good Thyrsis? Prythee briefly shew.
Spi. I'll tell you; 'tis not vain or fabulous;
(Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by th' heav'nly Muse,
Story'd of old in high immortal verse,
Of dire chimeras and inchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.
Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immur'd in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skill'd in all his mother's witcheries,
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mix'd, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding Reason's mintage
Character'd in the face; this have I learnt
Tending my flocks hard by i' th' hilly crofts
That brow this bottom glade, whence night by night
He, and his monstrous rout, are heard to howl
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,

Doing abhorred rites to Hecate,
In their obscured haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits, and guileful spells,
To inveigle and invite th' unwary sense
Of them, that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savory herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flanting honey-suckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till Fancy had her fill; but ere a close
The wonted roar was up amid'st the woods,
And fill'd the air with barbarous dissonance;
At which I ceas'd, and listen'd them awhile,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence,
Gave respite to the drousy-flighted steeds,
That draw the litter of close-curtain'd Sleep;
At last a soft and solemn breathing sound
Rose like a stream of rich distill'd perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took e'er she was ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displac'd. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death: but O ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honour'd Lady, your dear sister.
Amaz'd I stood, harrow'd with grief and fear:
And O poor helpless nightingale, thought I,
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till guided by mine ear I found the place,
Where that damn'd wizard, hid in sly disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew) had met
Already, e'er my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent Lady, his wish'd prey,
Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.

Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here;
But further know I not.
  Y. Bro. O night and shades,
How are ye join'd with Hell in triple knot,
Against th' unarm'd weakness of one virgin
Alone, and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me Brother?
  E. Bro. Yes, and keep it still;
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me: against the threats
Of Malice, or of Sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance; this I hold firm,
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt;
Surpris'd by unjust force, but not inthrall'd;
Yea even that which Mischief meant most harm,
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory;
But evil on itself shall back recoil
And mix no more with goodness; when, at last,
Gather'd like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change,
Self-fed, and self-consum'd: if this fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on,
Against th' opposing will and arm of Heav'n
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But for that damn'd Magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to restore his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Curs'd as his life.
  Spi. Alas! good vent'rous Youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;
But here thy sword can do thee little stead;
Far other arms, and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms:
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

E. Bro. Why, prythee, Shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near,
As to make this relation?
Spi. Care and utmost shifts
How to secure the Lady from surprizal,
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd
In every virtuous plant, and healing herb,
That spreads her verdant leaf to th' morning ray:
He lov'd me well, and oft would beg me sing;
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would'st sit, and hearken even to extasy,
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And shew me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties:
Among the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out;
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteem'd, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily, with his clouted shoon;
And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave;
He call'd it Hemony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sov'reign use
'Gainst all inchantments, mildew, blast, or damp,
Or ghastly furies' apparition.
I purs'd it up, but little reck'ning made,
Till now that this extremity compell'd:
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter, though disguis'd;
Enter'd the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off; if you have this about you,
(As I will give you when we go) you may
Boldly assault the Necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood,
And brandish'd blade, rush on him, break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground,
But seize his wand; though he and his curs'd crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,

Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.
E. Bro. Thyrsis, lead on apace, I'll follow thee,
And some good angel bear a shield before us.

The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness: soft music, tables spread with all dainties. Comus *appears with his rabble, and the* Lady *set in an inchanted chair, to whom he offers his glass, and which she puts by, and goes about to rise.*

Com. Nay, lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chain'd up in alabaster,
And you a statue, or as Daphne was
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.
La. Fool, do not boast;
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind,
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacl'd, while Heav'n sees good.
Com. Why are you vext, lady? why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far: see here be all the pleasures
That Fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season.
And first behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spi'rits of balm, and fragrant syrups mix'd,
Not that Nepenthes, which the wife of Thone,
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which nature lent
For gentle usage, and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal like an ill borrower
With that which you receiv'd on other terms,
Scorning the unexempt condition
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,

That have been tir'd all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted; but, fair Virgin,
This will restore all soon.
  La. 'Twill not, false traitor,
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banish'd from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage and the safe abode
Thou toldst me of? What grim aspects are these,
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brew'd inchantments, foul deceiver;
Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence
With visor'd falsehood, and base forgery?
And would'st thou seek again to trap me here
With liquorish baits fit to insnare a brute?
Where it a draft for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste any treasonous offer; none
But such as are good men can give good things,
And that which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wise appetite.
  Com. O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please, and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk,
To deck her sons; and that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutch't th' all-worship't ore, and precious gems,
To store her children with: if all the world,
Should, in a pet of temp'rance feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
Th' All-giver would be unthank'd, would be unprais'd,
Not half his riches known, and yet despis'd,
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons:

Who would be quite surcharg'd with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility.
Th' earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air darkt with plumes,
The herds would over-multitude their lords;
The sea o'erfraught would swell; and th' unsought diamonds
Would so imblaze the forehead of the Deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inur'd to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, lady, be not coy, and be not cozen'd
With that same vaunted name, Virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current, and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in th' enjoyment of itself;
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose,
It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shewn
In courts, in feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship;
It is for homely features to keep home;
They had their name thence; coarse complexions,
And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the housewife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the Morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts,
Think what, and be advis'd; you are but young yet.
La. I had not thought to have unlock'd my lip
In this unhallow'd air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules, prankt in Reason's garb.
I hate, when Vice can bolt her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance; she, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance:

If every just man, that now pines with want,
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispens'd
In unsuperfluous, even proportion,
And she no wit incumber'd with her store;
And then the giver would be better thank'd,
His praise due paid! for swinish gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heav'n amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enough? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words,
Against the sun-clad pow'r of Chastity,
Fain would I something say, yet to what end?
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul to apprehend,
The sublime notion, and high mystery,
That must be utter'd to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of Virginity,
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc'd:
Yet should I try, the uncontrouled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,
And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magic structures, rear'd so high,
Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.
Com. She fables not; I feel that I do fear
Her words, set off by some superior power;
And though not mortal, yet a cold shudd'ring dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly. Come, no more,
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation;
I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the lees

And settling of a melancholy blood:
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.

The BROTHERS *rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground; his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in; the attendant* SPIRIT *comes in.*

SPI. What, have you let the false inchanter scape!
O ye mistook, ye should have snatch'd his wand,
And bound him fast; without his rod revers'd,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the lady that sits here,
In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless:
Yet stay, be not disturb'd; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have, which may be us'd,
Which once, of Melibœus old, I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er pip'd on plains.
There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream;
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure;
Whilome she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enraged stepdame Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood,
That stay'd her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water-nymphs that in the bottom play'd,
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall;
Who, piteous of her woes, rear'd her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectar'd lavers strow'd with asphodil,
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she reviv'd,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made Goddess of the river; still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve

Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blast, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals;
For which the shepherds at their festivals
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invok'd, in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need; this will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

SONG.

Sabrina fair,
  Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
    In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
    Listen, for dear Honour's sake,
    Goddess of the silver lake.
        Listen and save;
Listen and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus;
By th' earth shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestic pace;
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wisard's hook;
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old sooth-saying Glaucus' spell;
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands;
By Thetis' tinsel-slipper'd feet,
And the songs of Sirens sweet;
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks,
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;

By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams, with wily glance;
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answer'd have.
Listen and save.

SABRINA *rises, attended by water-nymphs, and sings.*

By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agat, and the azure sheen
Of turkis blue, and emrald green,
That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslips velvet head,
That bends not as I tread;
Gentle Swain, at thy request,
I am here.
SPI. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band
Of true Virgin here distrest,
Through the force, and through the wile
Of unblest inchanter vile.
SAB. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help insnared chastity:
Brightest Lady, look on me;
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops that from my fountain pure
I have kept of precious cure,
Thrice upon thy fingers' tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip;
Next this marble-venom'd seat,
Smear'd with gums of glutenous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold:
Now the spell hath lost his hold;
And I must haste e'er morning hour
To wait on Amphitrite's bower.

SABRINA *descends, and the* LADY *rises out of her seat.*

SPI. Virgin, daughter of Locrine
Sprung from old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmed waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills:
Summer drouth, or singed air
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten chrystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl, and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crown'd
With many a tower and terras round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh, and cinnamon.
Come, Lady, while heav'n lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the Sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste, or needless sound,
Till we come to holier ground;
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide,
And not many furlongs thence
Is your father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wish'd presence, and beside
All the swains that near abide,
With jigs and rural dance resort;
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double at their mirth and cheer.
Come let us haste, the stars grow high,
But night sits monarch yet in the mid sky!

The scene changes, presenting Ludlow town and the president's castle; then come in country dancers; after them the attendant Spirit, *with the two* Brothers, *and the* Lady.

SONG.

Spi. Back, Shepherds, back, enough your play
Till next sun-shine holiday;
Here be without duck or nod
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise
With the mincing Dryades
On the lawns, and on the leas.

This second song presents them to their father and mother.

Noble Lord, and Lady bright,
I have brought you new delight;
Here behold, so goodly grown,
Three fair branches of your own;
Heav'n hath timely try'd their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance,
O'er sensual folly and intemperance.

The dance ended, the Spirit *epiloguizes.*

Spi. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where Day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky:
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three,
That sing about the golden tree:
Along the crispid shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring,
The Graces, and the rosy-bosom'd Hours,
Thither all their bounties bring;

That there eternal Summer dwells,
And west-winds with musky wing
About the cedar'n alleys fling
Nard and Cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can shew,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits th' Assyrian queen;
But far above in spangled sheen
Celestial Cupid, her fam'd son, advanc'd,
Holds her dear Psyche sweet intranc'd,
After her wand'ring labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.
  But now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly, or I can run
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend,
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
  Mortals that would follow me,
Love Virtue, she alone is free,
She can teach you how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or if Virtue feeble were,
Heav'n itself would stoop to her.

L'ALLEGRO.

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
  Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born;
In Stygian cave forlorn
  Mong'st horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy
Find out some uncouth cell,
  Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night raven sings;
  There under ebon shades and low brow'd rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
  In dark Cimerian desert ever dwell.
But come, thou Goddess fair and free,
In Heav'n, yclep'd Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus at a birth
With two sister Graces more
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore;
Or whether (as some sages sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a Maying,
There on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses wash'd in dew,
Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.
Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,
Nods and Becks, and wreathed Smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimples sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic toe,

And in thy right hand lead with thee,
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty;
And if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled Dawn doth rise;
Then to come in spite of Sorrow,
And at my window bid good morrow,
Through the sweet-brier, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine:
While the cock with lively din
Scatters the rear of Darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before;
Oft list'ning how the hounds and horn,
Cheerly rouse the slumb'ring Morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill:
Some time walking not unseen
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Rob'd in flames, and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight,
While the plow-man near at hand
Whistles o'er the the furrow'd land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower wets his sithe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landskip round it measures,
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray,
Mountains on whose barren breast
The lab'ring clouds do often rest,
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide.

Towers and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The Cynosure of neighb'ring eyes.
Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes,
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Cordyon and Thyrsis met,
Are at their savoury dinner set,
Of herbs, and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or if the earlier season lead
To the tann'd haycock in the mead.
Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecs sound
To many a youth, and many a maid,
Dancing in the chequer'd shade;
And young and old came forth to play
On a sunshine holy-day,
Till the live-long day-light fail;
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How fairy Mab the junkets eat,
She was pinch'd, and pull'd she said,
And he by friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat,
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, e'er glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath thresh'd the corn
That ten day-lab'rers could not end;
Then lies him down the lubbar fiend,
And stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And crop full out of doors he flings,
E'er the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whisp'ring winds soon lull'd asleep.
Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,

Where throngs of knights and barons bold
In weeds of Peace high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit, or arms, while both contend
To win her grace, whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And Pomp, and Feast, and Revelry,
With Mask and antique Pageantry,
Such sights as youthful poets dream,
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespear, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal Verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce
In notes with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains, that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heapt Elysian flow'rs, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half regain'd Eurydice.
These delights, if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live,

IL PENSEROSO.

Hence, vain deluding Joys,
  The brood of Folly without father bred,
How little you bested,
  Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys?
Dwell in some idle brain,
  And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
  As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,
Or likelieſt hovering dreams,
  The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But hail, thou Goddess, sage and holy,
Hail, divinest Melancholy,
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of Human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
Or that starr'd Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The sea-nymphs, and their pow'rs offended:
Yet thou art higher far descended;
Thee bright-hair'd Vesta long of yore
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she (in Saturn's reign,
Such mixture was not held a stain),
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
While yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, stedfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Following with majestic train,

And sable stole of Cyprus lawn,
Over thy decent shoulders drawn;
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gate,
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast:
And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing:
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring,
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,
Gently o'er th' accustom'd oak;
Sweet bird that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee chauntress oft the woods among
I woo to hear thy even-song;
And missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wand'ring moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the Heav'n's wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-water'd shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar;

Or if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach Light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the belman's drousy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm:
Or let my lamp at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tow'r,
Where I may oft out-watch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato to unfold
What worlds, or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook:
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet, or with element.
Sometimes let gorgeous Tragedy
In scepter'd pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes' or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine,
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.
But, O sad Virgin, that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower,
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes, as warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what Love did seek.
Or call up him that left half told,
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass,
On which the Tartar king did ride;
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of turneys and of trophies hung,

Of forests, and inchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear;
Not trickt and frounct as she was wont
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kercheft in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or usher'd with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute drops from off the eaves.
And when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me goddess bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown that Sylvan loves
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heaved stroke
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt;
There in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from Day's garish eye,
While the bee with honied thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feather'd sleep:
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings in airy stream
Of lively portraiture display'd,
Softly on my eye-lids laid.
And as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or th' unseen Genius of the wood.
But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloysters pale,
And love the high embowed roof
With antic pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.

There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voic'd quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that Heav'n doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew;
Till old Experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

LYCIDAS.

In this Monody the Author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned on his Passage from Chester, on the Irish Seas, 1637, and by occasion foretels the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their height.

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye Myrtles brown, with Ivy never soar,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forc'd fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due:
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer:
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhime.
He must not float upon his wat'ry bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Begin then, Sisters of the Sacred Well,
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse,
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favour my destin'd urn,
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud:
For we were nurst upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.

Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eye lids of the Morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard
What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,
Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright,
Tow'rds Heav'n's descent had slopt his west'ring wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to th' oaten flute,
Rough Satyrs danc'd, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long,
And old Damætas lov'd to hear our song.

But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never must return!
Thee Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn.
The willows and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen,
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream:
Ay me! I fondly dream
Had you been there; for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself for her enchanting son,
Whom universal Nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His goary visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

Alas! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear sp'rit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. But not the praise,
Phœbus reply'd, and touch'd my trembling ears;
Fame is no plant that grows in mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to th' world, nor in broad Rumour lies,
But lives, and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy meed.

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,
Smooth sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood:
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the herald of the sea
That came in Neptune's plea;
He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain?
And question'd every gust of rugged winds
That blows from off each beak'd promontory;
They knew not of his story,
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd,
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters play'd.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark
Built in th' eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next Camus, reverend sire, when footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower, inscrib'd with woe.
Ah ! who hath reft (quoth he) my dearest pledge!
Last came, and last did go,
The pilot of the Galilean lake,
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain,
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain)
He shook his miter'd locks, and stern bespake,
How well could I have spar'd for thee, young Swain,
Enow of such as for their bellies' sake
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold ?
Of other care they little reck'ning make,
Than how to scramble at the shearer's feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest;
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs !
What recks it them? what need they? they are sped;
And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw,
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoll'n with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf, with privy paw,
Daily devours apace; and nothing said,
But that two-handed engine at the door,
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.

Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells, and flow'rets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star rarely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamel'd eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,

The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freakt with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well attir'd woodbine,
With cowslips wan, that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears:
Bid Amarantus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To stow the laureat herse where Lycid lies.
For so to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd,
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps, under the whelming tide,
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou to our moist vows deny'd,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great vision of the guarded mount
Looks tow'rd Namancos and Bayona's hold;
Look homeward angel now, and melt with ruth:
And, O ye Dolphins, waft the hopeless youth.

Weep no more, woful shepherds, weep no more;
For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
Sunk tho' he be beneath the wat'ry floor;
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of him that walk'd the waves,
Where other groves and other streams along,
With nectar hue his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of Joy and Love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore,

In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to th' oaks and rills,
While the still Morn went out with sandals gray,
He touch'd the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:
And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay;
At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue;
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.

SAMSON AGONISTES,*

A DRAMATIC POEM.

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* By mistake, in the notice of Milton's Life, Samson Agonistes was not added to the list of selections.

THE PERSONS.

Samson.
Manoah, the Father of Samson.
Dalila, his Wife.
Harapha of Gath.
Public Officer.
Messenger.
Chorus of Danites.

The Scene before the Prison in Gaza.

SAMSON AGONISTES.

THE ARGUMENT.

Samson made captive, blind, and now in the prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common work-house, on a festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open air, to a place nigh, somewhat retir'd, there to sit a while and bemoan his condition: Where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his Tribe, which make the Chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can; then by his old father Manoah, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom; lastly, that this feast was proclaim'd by the Philistines as a day of thanksgiving for their deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoah then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistine lords for Samson's redemption; who in the mean while is visited by other persons; and lastly by a public officer to require his coming to the feast before the lords and people, to play or shew his strength in their presence; he at first refuses, dismissing the public officer with absolute denial to come; at length, persuaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatenings to fetch him: the Chorus yet remaining on the place, Manoah returns full of joyful hope, to procure ere long his son's deliverance, in the midst of which discourse an Hebrew comes in haste, confusedly at first, and afterwards more distinctly relating the catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself; wherewith the tragedy ends.

SAMSON.

A LITTLE onward lend thy guiding hand
To these dark steps, a little further on;
For yonder bank hath choice of sun or shade:
There I am wont to sit, when any chance
Relieves me from my task of servile toil,
Daily in the common prison else enjoin'd me,

Where I a prisoner chain'd, scarce freely draw
The air imprison'd also, close and damp,
Unwholesome draught: but here I feel amends,
The breath of Heav'n fresh blowing, pure and sweet,
With day-spring born; here leave me to respire.
This day a solemn feast the people hold
To Dagon their sea-idol, and forbid
Laborious works; unwillingly this rest
Their superstition yields me; hence with leave
Retiring from the popular noise, I seek
This unfrequented place to find some ease,
Ease to the body some, none to the mind
From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm
Of hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone,
But rush upon me thronging, and present
Times past, what once I was, and what am now.
O wherefore was my birth from Heav'n foretold
Twice by an angel, who at last in sight
Of both my parents all in flames ascended
From off the altar, where an offering burn'd,
As in a fiery column charioting
His god-like presence, and from some great act
Or benefit reveal'd to Abraham's race?
Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd
As of a person separate to God,
Design'd for great exploits; if I must die
Betray'd, captiv'd, and both my eyes put out,
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze;
To grind in brazen fetters under task
With this Heav'n-gifted strength? O glorious strength
Put to the labour of a beast, debas'd
Lower than bond-slave! Promise was that I
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver;
Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke:
Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt
Divine prediction; what if all foretold
Had been fulfill'd, but through mine own default,
Whom have I to complain of but myself?
Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft me,

Under the seal of silence could not keep,
But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
O'ercome with importunity and tears;
O impotence of mind, in body strong!
But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom? vast, unwieldly, burthensome,
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,
But to subserve where wisdom bears command!
God, when he gave me strength, to shew withal
How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair.
But peace; I must not quarrel with the will
Of highest dispensation, which herein
Haply had ends above my reach to know:
Suffices that to me strength is my bane,
And proves the source of all my miseries;
So many and so huge, that each apart
Would ask a life to wail, but chief of all,
O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!
Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,
And all her various objects of delight
Annull'd, which might in part my grief have eas'd,
Inferior to the vilest now become
Of man or worm: the vilest here excel me;
They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, expos'd
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
In power of others, never in my own;
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
Without all hope of day!
O first created beam, and thou great WORD,
Let there be light, and light was over all;
Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree?
The sun to me is dark
And silent as the moon,
When she deserts the night
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.
Since light so necessary is to life,

And almost life itself, if it be true
That light is in the soul,
She, all in every part; why was the sight
To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd?
So obvious and so easy to be quench'd?
And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,
That she might look at will through every pore?
Then had I not been thus exil'd from light,
As in the land of darkness yet in light,
To live a life half dead, a living death,
And bury'd: but O yet more miserable!
Myself my sepulchre, a moving grave,
Bury'd, yet not exempt
By privilege of death and burial
From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs,
But made hereby obnoxious more
To all the miseries of life,
Life in captivity
Among inhuman foes.
But who are these? for with joint pace I hear
The tread of many feet steering this way;
Perhaps my enemies, who come to stare
At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,
Their daily practice, to afflict me more.
  Chor. This, this is he; softly a while,
Let us not break in upon him;
O change beyond report, thought or belief!
See how he lies at random, carelessly diffus'd,
With languish'd head unpropt,
As one past hope, abandon'd,
And by himself given over;
In slavish habit, ill fitted weeds
O'er-worn and soil'd;
Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be he,
That heroic, that renown'd,
Irresistible Samson; whom unarm'd
No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast could withstand;
Who tore the lion, as the lion tears the kid,
Ran on imbattl'd armies clad in iron,
And weaponless himself,
Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery

Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer'd cuirass,
Chalybean temper'd steel, and frock of mail
Adamantean proof;
But safest he who stood aloof,
When insupportably his foot advanc'd,
In scorn of their proud arms and warlike tools,
Spurn'd them to death by troops. The bold Ascalonite
Fled from his lion ramp, old warriors turn'd
Their plated backs under his heel;
Or grov'ling soil'd their crested helmets in the dust.
Then with what trival weapon came to hand,
The jaw of a dead ass, his sword of bone,
A thousand foreskins fell, the flower of Palestine,
In Ramah-lechi famous to this day.
Then by main force pull'd up, and on his shoulders bore,
The gates of Azza, post, and massy bar,
Up to the hill by Hebron, seat of giants old,
No journey of a sabbath-day, and loaded so;
Like whom the Gentiles feign'd to bear up Heav'n.
Which shall I first bewail,
Thy bondage or lost sight,
Prison within prison
Inseparably dark?
Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!)
The dungeon of thyself; thy soul
(Which men enjoying sight oft without cause complain)
Imprison'd now indeed,
In real darkness of the body dwells.
Shut up from outward light
To incorporate with gloomy night;
For inward light, alas!
Puts forth no visual beam.
O mirror of our fickle state,
Since man on earth unparallell'd!
The rarer thy example stands.
By how much from the top of wondrous glory,
Strongest of mortal men,
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fall'n!
For him I reckon not in high estate
Whom long descent of birth
Or the sphere of fortune raises;
But thee whose strength, while virtue was her mate,

Might have subdued the earth,
Universally crown'd with highest praises.
  Sam. I hear the sound of words, their sense the air
Dissolves unjointed ere it reach my ear.
  Chor. He speaks; let us draw nigh. Matchless in might,
The glory late of Israel, now the grief;
We come thy friends and neighbours not unknown
From Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful vale,
To visit or bewail thee, or if better,
Counsel or consolation we may bring,
Salve to thy sores; apt words have power to swage
The tumours of a troubled mind,
And are as balm to fester'd wounds.
  Sam. Your coming, friends, revives me; for I learn
Now of my own experience, not by talk,
How counterfeit a coin they are who friends
Bear in their superscription, (of the most
I would be understood) in prosp'rous days
They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head,
Not to be found, though sought. Ye see, O friends,
How many evils have enclos'd me round;
Yet that which was the worst now least inflicts me,
Blindness; for, had I sight, confus'd with shame,
How could I once look up, or heave the head,
Who like a foolish pilot have shipwreck'd
My vessel trusted to me from above,
Gloriously rigg'd; and for a word, a tear,
Fool, have divulg'd the secret gift of God
To a deceitful woman? tell me, friends,
Am I not sung and proverb'd for a fool
In every street? do they not say how well
Are come upon him his deserts? yet why?
Immeasurable strength they might behold
In me, of wisdom nothing more than mean;
This with the other should, at least have pair'd,
These two proportion'd ill drove me transverse.
  Chor. Tax not divine disposal; wisest men
Have err'd, and by bad women been deceiv'd;
And shall again, pretend they ne'er so wise.
Deject not then so overmuch thyself,
Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides;

Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder
Why thou should'st wed Philistian women rather
Than of thine own tribe fairer, or as fair,
At least of thy own nation, and as noble.
  Sam. The first I saw at Timna, and she pleas'd
Me, not my parents, that I sought to wed
The daughter of an infidel: they knew not
That what I mention'd was of God; I knew
From intimate impulse, and therefore urg'd
The marriage on: that by occasion hence
I might begin Israel's deliverance,
The work to which I was divinely call'd.
She proving false, the next I took to wife
(O that I never had! fond wish too late)
Was in the vale of Sorec, Dalila,
That specious monster, my accomplish'd snare.
I thought it lawful from my former act,
And the same end; still watching to oppress
Israel's oppressors: of what now I suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I myself,
Who, vanquish'd with a peal of words. (O weakness!)
Gave up my fort of silence to a woman.
  Chor. In seeking just occasion to provoke
The Philistine, thy country's enemy,
Thou never wast remiss, I bear thee witness:
Yet Israel still serves with all his sons.
  Sam. That fault I take not on me, but transfer
On Israel's governors, and heads of tribes,
Who seeing those great acts, which God had done
Singly by me against their conquerors,
Acknowledg'd not, or not at all consider'd
Deliverance offer'd: I on the other side
Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds;
The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the doer;
But they persisted deaf, and would not seem
To count them things worth notice, till at length
Their lords, the Philistines, with gather'd powers
Enter'd Judea seeking me, who then
Safe to the rock of Etham was retir'd,
Not flying, but fore-casting in what place

To set upon them, what advantag'd best:
Mean while the men of Judah, to prevent
The harass of their land, beset me round;
I willingly on some conditions came
Into their hands, and they as gladly yield me
To the uncircumcis'd a welcome prey,
Bound with two cords; but cords to me were threads
Touch'd with the flame: on their whole host I flew
Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd
Their choicest youth; they only liv'd who fled.
Had Judah that day join'd, or one whole tribe,
They had by this possess'd the towers of Gath,
And lorded over them whom they now serve:
But what more oft in nations grown corrupt,
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty;
And to despise, or envy, or suspect
Whom God hath of his special favour rais'd
As their deliverer; if he aught begin,
How frequent to desert him, and at last
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds?
  Chor. Thy words to my remembrance bring
How Succoth and the fort of Penuel
Their great deliverer contemn'd,
The matchless Gideon in pursuit
Of Madian and her vanquish'd kings:
And how ungrateful Ephraim
Had dealt with Jeptha, who by argument,
Not worse than by his shield and spear,
Defended Israel from the Ammonite,
Had not his prowess quell'd their pride
In that sore battle, when so many dy'd
Without reprieve adjudg'd to death,
For want of well-pronouncing Shibboleth.
  Sam. Of such examples add me to the roll;
Me easily indeed mine may neglect,
But God's propos'd deliverance not so.
  Chor. Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men;
Unless there be who think not God at all;

If any be, they walk obscure;
For of such doctrine never was there school,
But the heart of the fool,
And no man therein doctor but himself.
Yet more there be who doubt his ways not just,
As to his own edicts found contradicting,
Then give the reins to wand'ring thought,
Regardless of his glory's diminution;
Till, by their own perplexities involv'd,
They ravel more, still less resolv'd,
But never find self-satisfying solution.
As if they would confine th' Interminable,
And tie him to his own prescript,
Who made our laws to bind us, not himself,
And hath full right t' exempt
Whom so it pleases him by choice
From national obstriction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt;
For with his own laws he can best dispense.
He would not else who never wanted means,
Nor in respect of th' enemy just cause
To set his people free,
Have prompted this heroic Nazarite,
Against his vow of strictest purity,
To seek in marriage that fallacious bride,
Unclean, unchaste.
Down reason then, at least vain reasonings down,
Tho' reason here aver
That moral verdict quits her of unclean;
Unchaste was subsequent, her stain, not his.
But see here comes thy reverend sire
With careful step, locks white as down,
Old Manoah: advise
Forthwith how thou ought'st to receive him.
Sam. Ay me, another inward grief, awak'd
With mention of that name, renews th' assault.
Man. Brethren, and men of Dan; for such ye seem,
Tho' in this uncouth place; if old respect,
As I suppose, tow'rds your once glory'd friend,
My son, now captive, hither hath inform'd
Your younger feet, while mine, cast back with age,
Came lagging after; say if he be here?

Chor. As signal now in low dejected state,
As erst in high'st, behold him where he lies.
Man. O miserable change! is this the man,
That invincible Samson, far renown'd,
The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength
Equivalent to Angels, walk'd their streets,
None offering fight; who single combatant
Duel'd their armies, rank in proud array,
Himself an army, now unequal match
To save himself against a coward arm'd
At one spear's length. O ever-failing trust
In mortal strength! and oh what not in man
Deceivable and vain? Nay what thing good
Pray'd for, but often proves our wo, our bane?
I pray'd for children, and thought barrenness
In wedlock a reproach; I gain'd a son,
And such a son as all men hail'd me happy;
Who would be now a father in my stead?
O wherefore did God grant me my request,
And as a blessing with such pomp adorn'd?
Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt
Our earnest pray'rs, then given with solemn hand
As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind?
For this did th' Angel twice descend? for this
Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a plant
Select, and sacred, glorious for a while,
The miracle of men; then in an hour
Insnar'd, assaulted, overcome, led bound,
Thy foes' derision, captive, poor, and blind,
Into a dungeon thrust, to work with slaves?
Alas, methinks, whom God hath chosen once
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,
He should not so o'erwhelm, and as a thrall
Subject him to so foul indignities,
Be' it but for honour's sake of former deeds.
Sam. Appoint not heav'nly disposition, father;
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me
But justly; I myself have brought them on,
Sole author I, sole cause: if aught seems vile,
As vile hath been my folly, who have profan'd
The mystery of God giv'n me under pledge
Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,

A Canaanite, my faithless enemy.
This well I knew; nor was at all surpris'd,
But warn'd by oft experience: did not she
Of Timna first betray me, and reveal
The secret wrested from me in her height
Of nuptial love profess'd, carrying it straight
To them who had corrupted her, my spies,
And rivals? In this other was there found
More faith, who also in her prime of love,
Spousal embraces, vitiated with gold,
Tho' offer'd only, by the scent conceiv'd
Her spurious first-born, treason against me?
Thrice she assay'd me with flattering pray'rs and sighs,
And amorous reproaches, to win from me
My capital secret, in what part my strength
Lay stor'd, in what part summ'd, that she might know;
Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport
Her importunity, each time perceiving
How openly, and with what impudence
She purpos'd to betray me, and (which was worse
Than undissembled hate) with what contempt
She sought to make me traitor to myself;
Yet the fourth time, when must'ring all her wiles,
With blandish'd parlies, feminine assaults,
Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night
To storm me, overwatch'd and wearied out,
At times when men seek most repose and rest,
I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart,
Who with a grain of manhood well resolv'd
Might easily have shook off all her snares;
But foul effeminacy held me yok'd
Her bond-slave; O indignity, O blot
To honour and religion! servile mind
Rewarded well with servile punishment!
The base degree to which I now am fall'n.
These rags, this grinding is not yet so base
As was my former servitude, ignoble,
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,
True slavery, and that blindness worse than this,
That saw not how degenerately I serv'd.
 Man. I cannot praise thy marriage choices, Son,

Rather approv'd them not; but thou didst plead
Divine impulsion prompting how thou might'st
Find some occasion to infest our foes.
I state not that; this I am sure, our foes
Found soon occasion thereby to make thee
Their captive, and their triumph; thou the sooner
Temptation found'st, or over potent charms
To violate the secret trust of silence
Deposited with thee; which to have kept
Tacit was in thy power: true; and thou bear'st
Enough, and more, the burden of that fault;
Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying
That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains;
This day the Philistines a popular feast
Here celebrate in Gaza; and proclaim
Great pomp, and sacrifice, and praises loud
To Dagon, as their God, who hath deliver'd
Thee, Samson, bound and blind into their hands,
Them out of thine, who slewest them many a slain.
So Dagon shall be magnify'd, and God,
Besides whom is no God, compar'd with idols,
Disglorify'd, blasphem'd, and had in scorn
By the idolatrous rout amidst their wine;
Which to have come to pass by means of thee,
Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest,
Of all reproach the most with shame that ever
Could have befall'n thee and thy father's house.
SAM. Father, I too acknowledge and confess
That I this honour, I this pomp have brought
To Dagon, and advanc'd his praises high
Among the Heathen round; to God have brought
Dishonour, obloquy, and op'd the mouths
Of idolists, and atheists; have brought scandal
To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt
In feeble hearts, propense enough before
To waver, or fall off, and join with idols;
Which is my chief affliction, shame and sorrow,
The anguish of my soul, that suffers not
Mine eyes to harbour sleep, or thoughts to rest.
This only hope relieves me, that the strife
With me hath end; all the contest is now

'Twixt God and Dagon; Dagon hath presum'd,
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,
His deity comparing and preferring
Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure,
Will not connive or linger, thus provok'd,
But will arise, and his great name assert:
Dagon must stoop, and shall e'er long receive
Such a discomfit as shall quite despoil him
Of all these boasted trophies won on me,
And with confusion blank his worshippers.
  Man. With cause this hope relieves thee, and these words
I as a prophecy receive; for God,
Nothing more certain, will not long defer
To vindicate the glory of his name
Against all competition; nor will long
Endure it doubtful whether God be Lord,
Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be done?
Thou must not in the mean while here forgot
Lie in this miserable loathsome plight,
Neglected. I already have made way
To some Philistian lords, with whom to treat
About thy ransom: well they may by this
Have satisfy'd their utmost of revenge
By pains and slaveries, worse than death inflicted
On thee, who now no more canst do them harm.
  Sam. Spare that proposal, Father, spare the trouble
Of that solicitation; let me here
As I deserve, pay on my punishment;
And expiate, if possible, my crime,
Shameful garrulity. To have reveal'd
Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,
How heinous had the fact been, how deserving
Contempt and scorn of all, to be excluded
All friendship, and avoided as a blab,
The mark of fool set on his front?
But I, God's counsel have not kept, his holy secret
Presumptuously have publish'd impiously,
Weakly at least, and shamefully: a sin
That Gentiles in their parables condemn
To their abyss and horrid pains confin'd.

Man. Be penitent, and for thy fault contrite,
But act not in thine own affliction, Son:
Repent of sin, but if the punishment
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids;
Or th' execution leave to high disposal,
And let another hand, not thine, exact
Thy penal forfeit from thyself; perhaps
God will relent, and quit thee all his debt;
Who ever more approves and more accepts,
(Best pleas'd with humble' and filial submission)
Him who imploring mercy sues for life,
Than who self rigorous chooses death as due;
Which argues over-just, and self-displeas'd,
For self-offence, more than for God offended.
Reject not then what offer'd means; who knows
But God hath set before us, to return thee
Home to thy country and his sacred house,
Where thou may'st bring thy offerings, to avert
His further ire, with pray'rs and vows renew'd?
Sam. His pardon I implore; but as for life,
To what end should I seek it? when in strength
All mortals I excell'd, and great in hopes
With youthful courage and magnanimous thoughts
Of birth from Heav'n foretold and high exploits,
Full of divine instinct, after some proof
Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond
The sons of Anak, famous now and blaz'd,
Fearless of danger, like a petty god
I walk'd about admir'd of all, and dreaded
On hostile ground, none daring my affront.
Then swoll'n with pride, into the snare I fell
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,
Soften'd with pleasure and voluptuous life,
At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge
Of all my strength in the lascivious lap
Of a deceitful concubine, who shore me
Like a tame weather, all my precious fleece,
Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,
Shav'n, and disarm'd among mine enemies.
Chor. Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,
Which many a famous warrior o'erturns,

Thou couldst repress, nor did the dancing ruby
Sparkling, out pour'd, the flavour, or the smell,
Or taste that cheers the heart of gods and men,
Allure thee from the cool crystallin stream.
  Sam. Wherever fountain or fresh current flow'd
Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure
With touch ethereal of Heav'n's fiery rod
I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying
Thirst, and refresh'd; nor envy'd them the grape
Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with fumes.
  Chor. O madness, to think use of strongest wines
And strongest drinks our chief support of health,
When God with these forbidd'n made choice to rear
His mighty champion, strong above compare,
Whose drink was only from the liquid brook.
  Sam. But what avail'd this temp'rance, not complete,
Against another object more enticing?
What boots it at one gate to make defence,
And at another to let in the foe,
Effeminately vanquish'd? by which means,
Now blind, dishearten'd, sham'd, dishonour'd, quell'd,
To what can I be useful, wherein serve
My nation and the work from Heav'n impos'd,
But to sit idle on the household hearth,
A burd'nous drone; to visitants a gaze,
Or pity'd object, these redundant locks
Robustious to no purpose, clust'ring down,
Vain monuments of strength; till length of years
And sedentary numness craze my limbs
To a contemptible old age obscure?
Here rather let me drudge and earn my bread,
Till vermin or the draff of servile food
Consume me, and oft invoked death
Hasten the welcome end of all my pains.
  Man. Wilt thou then serve the Philistines with that gift
Which was expressly giv'n thee to annoy them
Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,
Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age outworn.
But God who caus'd a fountain at thy prayer
From the dry ground to spring, thy thirst to' allay

After the brunt of battle, can as easy
Cause light again within thy eyes to spring,
Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast;
And I persuade me so; why else this strength
Miraculous yet remaining in those locks?
His might continues in thee not for nought,
Nor shall his wond'rous gifts be frustrate thus.
  Sam. All otherwise to me my thoughts portend,
That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,
Nor th' other light of life continue long,
But yield to double darkness, night at hand:
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat. Nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself,
My race of glory run, and race of shame,
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.
  Man. Believe not these suggestions, which proceed
From anguish of the mind and humours black,
That mingle with thy fancy. I, however,
Must not omit a father's timely care,
To prosecute the means of thy deliverance
By ransome, or how else: meanwhile be calm,
And healing words from these thy friends admit.
  Sam. O that torment should not be confin'd
To the body's wounds and sores,
With maladies innumerable
In heart, head, breast, and reins;
But must secret passage find
To th' inmost mind,
There exercise all his fierce accidents,
And on her purest spirits prey,
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,
With answerable pains, but more intense,
Though void of corporal sense.
  My griefs not only pain me
As a lingering disease,
But, finding no redress, ferment and rage,
Nor less than wounds immedicable
Rankle, and fester, and gangrene,
To black mortification.
Thoughts my tormentors, arm'd with deadly stings,

Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
Dire inflammation, which no cooling herb
Or medicinal liquor can assuage,
Nor breath of vernal air from snowy Alp.
Sleep hath forsook and giv'n me o'er
To death-benumbing opium, as my only cure:
Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,
And sense of Heav'n's desertion.
I was his nursling once, and choice delight,
His destin'd from the womb,
Promis'd by heav'nly message twice descending.
Under his special eye
Abstemious I grew up and thriv'd amain;
He led me on to mightiest deeds
Above the nerve of mortal arm
Against th' uncircumcis'd, our enemies:
But now hath cast me off as never known,
And to those cruel enemies,
Whom I by his appointment had provok'd,
Left me all helpless with the irreparable loss
Of sight, reserv'd alive to be repeated
The subject of their cruelty or scorn:
Nor am I in the list of them that hope;
Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless;
This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,
No long petition, speedy death,
The close of all my miseries, and the balm.
CHOR. Many are the sayings of the wise
In ancient and in modern books inroll'd,
Extolling patience as the truest fortitude;
And to the bearing well of all calamities,
All chances incident to man's frail life,
Consolitaries writ
With study'd argument, and much persuasion sought,
Lenient of grief and anxious thought:
But with th' afflicted in his pangs their sound
Little prevails, or rather seems a tune
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint;
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above,

Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.
God of our fathers, what is man?
That thou towards him with hand so various,
Or might I say contrarious,
Temper'st thy providence thro' this short course,
Not ev'nly, as thou rul'st
Th' angelic orders, and inferior creatures mute,
Irrational and brute.
Nor do I name of men that common rout,
That, wand'ring loose about,
Grow up and perish as the summer flie,
Heads without name no more remember'd,
But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorn'd
To some great work, thy glory,
And people's safety, which in part they' effect
Yet towards these thus dignify'd, thou oft
Amidst their height of noon
Changest thy count'nance and thy hand, with no regard
Of highest favours past
From thee on them, or them to thee of service.
Nor only dost degrade them, or remit
To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismission,
But throw'st them lower than thou didst exalt themhigh;
Unseemly falls in human eye,
Too grievous for the trespass or omission;
Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword
Of Heathen and profane, their carcasses
To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd;
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,
And condemnation of th' ungrateful multitude.
If these they 'scape, perhaps in poverty
With sickness and disease, thou bows't them down,
Painful diseases and deform'd,
In crude old age;
Tho' not disordinate, yet causeless suffering
The punishment of dissolute days: in fine,
Just or unjust alike seem miserable,
For oft alike both come to evil end.
So deal not with this once thy glorious champion,

The image of thy strength, and mighty minister.
What do I beg? how hast thou dealt already?
Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
His labours, for thou can'st, to peaceful end.
But who is this? what thing of sea or land?
Female of sex it seems,
That so bedeck'd, ornate, and gay,
Comes this way sailing
Like a stately ship
Of Tarsus, bound for th' isles
Of Javan or Gadire,
With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,
Courted by all the winds that hold them play,
An amber scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger, a damsel train behind;
Some rich Philistian matron she may seem,
And now at nearer view, no other certain
Than Dalila thy wife.
SAM. My wife, my traitress, let her not come near me.
CHOR. Yet on she moves, now stands and eyes thee fix'd,
About t' have spoke, but now, with head declin'd
Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew, she weeps,
And words address'd seem into tears dissolv'd,
Wetting the borders of her silken veil:
But now again she makes address to speak,
DAL. With doubtful feet and wavering resolution
I came, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson,
Which to have merited, without excuse,
I cannot but acknowledge; yet, if tears
May expiate (though the fact more evil drew
In the perverse event, than I foresaw)
My penance hath not slacken'd, tho' my pardon
No way assur'd. But conjugal affection
Prevailing over fear, and timorous doubt,
Hath led me on, desirous to behold
Once more thy face, and know of thy estate,
If aught in my ability may serve
To lighten what thou suffer'st, and appease
Thy mind with what amends is in my power,

Though late, yet in some part to recompense
My rash, but more unfortunate misdeed.
  Sam. Out, out hyæna; these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,
Then as repentant, to submit, beseech,
And reconcilement move with feign'd remorse;
Confess, and promise wonders in her change;
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urg'd his patience bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to assail:
Then with more cautious and instructed skill
Again transgresses, and again submits,
That wisest and best men full oft beguil'd
With goodness principled not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,
Intangled with a pois'nous bosom snake,
If not by quick destruction soon cut off
As I by thee, to ages an example.
  Dal. Yet hear me, Samson, not that I endeavour
To lessen or extenuate my offence,
But that on the other side if it be weigh'd
By' itself, with aggravations not surcharg'd,
Or else with just allowance counterpois'd,
I may if possible thy pardon find
The easier tow'rds me, or thy hatred less.
First granting, as I do, it was a weakness
In me, but incident to all our sex,
Curiosity, inquisitive, importune
Of secrets, then with like infirmity
To publish them, both common female faults:
Was it not weakness also to make known
For importunity, that is for naught,
Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety?
To what I did thou shewd'st me first the way.
But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not:
Nor should'st thou have trusted that to woman's frailty:
E'er I to thee, thou to thyself wast cruel.
Let weakness then with weakness come to parley,
So near related or the same of kind;

Thine forgive mine, that men may censure thine
The gentler, if severely thou exact not
More strength from me than in thyself was found.
And what if love, which thou interpret'st haste,
The jealousy of love, powerful of sway
In human hearts, nor less in mind tow'rds thee,
Caus'd what I did? I saw thee mutable
Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou wouldst leave me
As her at Timna; sought by all means therefore
How to indear, and hold thee to me firmest:
No better way I saw than by' importuning
To learn thy secrets, get into my power
The key of strength and safety: thou wilt say,
Why then reveal'd? I was assur'd by those
Who tempted me that nothing was design'd
Against thee, but safe custody and hold:
That made for me; I knew that liberty
Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprises,
While I at home sat full of cares and fears,
Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed:
Here I should still enjoy thee day and night
Mine and love's prisoner, not the Philistines,
Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,
Fearless at home of partners in my love.
These reasons in love's law have past for good,
Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps;
And love hath oft, well meaning, wrought much wo,
Yet always pity or pardon hath obtain'd.
Be not unlike all others, not austere
As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.
If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,
In uncompassionate anger do not so.
  Sam. How cunningly the sorceress displays
Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine;
That malice not repentance brought thee hither,
By this appears: I gave, thou say'st, th' example,
I led the way: bitter reproach, but true;
I to myself was false e'er thou to me;
Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,
Take to thy wicked deed; which when thou seest
Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,

Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather
Confess it feign'd: weakness is thy excuse,
And I believe it, weakness to resist
Philistian gold: if weakness may excuse,
What murderer, what traitor, parricide,
Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?
All wickedness is weakness: that plea therefore
With God or man will gain thee no remission.
But love constrain'd thee; call it furious rage
To satisfy thy lust: love seeks to have love;
My love how could'st thou hope, who took'st the way
To raise in me inexpiable hate,
Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd?
In vain thou striv'st to cover shame with shame,
Or by evasions thy crime uncover'st more.
DAL. Since thou determin'st weakness for no plea
In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,
Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,
What sieges girt me round, e'er I consented;
Which might have aw'd the best resolv'd of men,
The constantest, to have yielded without blame.
It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,
That wrought with me: thou know'st the magistrates
And princes of my country came in person,
Solicited, commanded, threaten'd, urg'd.
Adjur'd by all the bonds of civil duty
And of religion, press'd how just it was,
How honourable, how glorious to intrap
A common enemy, who had destroy'd
Such numbers of our nation: and the priest
Was not behind, but ever at my ear,
Preaching how meritorious with the gods
It would be to insnare an irreligious
Dishonourer of Dagon: what had I
To oppose against such powerful arguments?
Only my love of thee held long debate,
And combated in silence all these reasons
With hard contest: at length that grounded maxim
So rife and celebrated in the mouths
Of wisest men, that to the public good
Private respects must yield, with grave authority

Took full possession of me, and prevail'd;
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty so enjoining.
  Sam. I thought where all thy circling wiles would end;
In feign'd religion, smooth hypocrisy.
But had thy love, still odiously pretended,
Been, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught thee
Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds.
I before all the daughters of my tribe
And of my nation chose thee from among
My enemies, lov'd thee, as too well thou knew'st,
Too well, unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,
Not out of levity, but over-power'd
By thy request, who could deny thee nothing;
Yet now am judg'd an enemy. Why then
Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband,
Then, as since then, thy country's foe profess'd?
Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave
Parents and country; nor was I their subject,
Nor under their protection, but my own;
Thou mine, not theirs: if aught against my life
Thy country sought of thee, it sought unjustly,
Against the law of nature, law of nations,
No more thy country, but an impious crew
Of men conspiring to uphold their state
By worse than hostile deeds, violating the ends
For which our country is a name so dear;
Not therefore to be obey'd. But zeal mov'd thee;
To please thy gods thou didst it; gods unable
To acquit themselves and prosecute their foes
But by ungodly deeds, the contradiction
Of their own deity, gods cannot be;
Less therefore to be pleas'd, obey'd, or fear'd.
These false pretexts and varnish'd colours failing,
Bare in thy guilt how foul must thou appear!
  Dal. In argument with men a woman ever
Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.
  Sam. For want of words no doubt, or lack of breath;
Witness when I was worried with thy peals.
  Dal. I was a fool, too rash, and, quite mistaken
In what I thought would have succeeded best.

Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson,
Afford me place to shew what recompense
Towards thee I intend for what I have misdone,
Misguided; only what remains past cure
Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist
To afflict thyself in vain: though sight be lost,
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd
Where other senses want not their delights
At home in leisure and domestic ease,
Exempt from many a care and chance to which
Eye-sight exposes daily men abroad.
I to the lords will intercede, not doubting
Their favourable ear, that I may fetch thee
From forth this loathsome prison-house, to abide
With me, where my redoubled love and care
With nursing diligence, to me glad office,
May ever tend about thee to old age,
With all things grateful cheer'd, and so supply'd,
That what by me thou hast lost thou least shall miss.
SAM. No, no, of my condition take no care;
It fits not; thou and I long since are twain:
Nor think me so unwary or accurs'd
To bring my feet again into the snare
Where once I have been caught; I know thy trains
Though dearly to my cost, thy gins, and toils;
Thy fair inchanted cup, and warbling charms
No more on me have power, their force is null'd,
So much of adder's wisdom I have learn'd
To fence my ear against thy sorceries.
If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men
Lov'd, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone couldst hate me
Thy husband, slight me, sell me and forego me;
How wouldst thou use me now, blind, and thereby
Deceivable, in most things as a child
Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and scorn'd,
And last neglected? How wouldst thou insult,
When I must live uxorious to thy will
In perfect thraldom, how again betray me,
Bearing my words and doings to the lords
To gloss upon, and censuring, frown or smile?

This jail I count the house of liberty
To thine, whose doors my feet shall never enter.
  Dal. Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand.
  Sam. Not for thy life, lest fierce remembrance wake
My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.
At distance I forgive thee, go with that;
Bewail thy falsehood, and the pious works
It hath brought forth to make thee memorable
Among illustrious women, faithful wives:
Cherish thy hasten'd widowhood with the gold
Of matrimonial treason: so farewel.
  Dal. I see thou art implacable, more deaf
To prayers than winds and seas; yet winds to seas
Are reconcil'd at length, and sea to shore:
Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,
Eternal tempest never to be calm'd.
Why do I humble thus myself, and suing
For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate?
Bid go with evil omen and the brand
Of infamy upon my name denounc'd?
To mix with thy concernments I desist
Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own.
Fame if not double fac'd is double mouth'd,
And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds;
On both his wings, one black, the other white,
Bears greatest names in his wild airy flight.
My name perhaps among the circumcis'd
In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,
To all posterity may stand defam'd,
With malediction mention'd, and the blot
Of falsehood most unconjugal traduc'd:
But in my country, where I most desire,
In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath,
I shall be nam'd among the famousest
Of women, sung at solemn festivals,
Living and dead recorded, who to save
Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
Above the faith of wedlock-bands, my tomb
With odours visited and annual flowers;
Not less renown'd than in Mount Ephraim
Jael, who with inhospitable guile

Smote Sicera sleeping through the temple nail'd.
Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy
The public marks of honour and reward
Conferr'd upon me for the piety
Which to my country I was judg'd to have shewn.
At this who ever envies or repines,
I leave him to his lot, and like my own.
  Chor. She's gone, a manifest serpent by her sting
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.
  Sam. So let her go; God sent her to debase me,
And aggravate my folly, who committed
To such a viper his most sacred trust
Of secrecy, my safety, and my life.
  Chor. Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,
After offence returning, to regain
Love once possess'd, nor can be easily
Repuls'd, without much inward passion felt
And secret sting of amorous remorse.
  Sam. Love quarrels oft in pleasing concord end;
Not wedlock-treachery endang'ring life.
  Chor. It is not virtue, wisdom, valour, wit,
Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit,
That woman's love can win or long inherit;
But what it is, hard is to say,
Harder to hit,
(Which way soever men refer it)
Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day
Or sev'n, though one should musing sit.
  If any of these, or all, the Timnian bride
Had not so soon preferr'd
Thy paranymph, worthless to thee compar'd,
Successor in thy bed,
Nor both so loosely disally'd
Their nuptials, nor this last so treacherously
Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.
Is it for that such outward ornament
Was lavish'd on their sex, that inward gifts
Were left for haste unfinish'd, judgment scant,
Capacity not rais'd to apprehend
Or value what is best

In choice, but oftest to affect the wrong?
Or was too much of self-love mix'd,
Of constancy no root infix'd,
That either they love nothing, or not long?
  Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best
Seeming at first all heav'nly under virgin veil,
Soft, modest, meek, demure,
Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a thorn
Intestine, far within defensive arms
A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue
Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms
Draws him awry enslav'd
With dotage, and his sense deprav'd
To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.
What pilot so expert but needs must wreck
Imbark'd with such a steers-mate at the helm?
  Favour'd of Heav'n, who finds
One virtuous rarely found,
That in domestic good combines:
Happy that house! his way to peace is smooth:
But virtue, which breaks through all opposition,
And all temptation can remove,
Most shines and most is acceptable above.
  Therefore God's universal law
Gave to the man despotic power
Over his female in due awe,
Nor from that right to part an hour,
Smile she or lour:
So shall he least confusion draw
On his whole life, not sway'd
By female usurpation, or dismay'd.
  But had we best retire, I see a storm?
  SAM. Fair days have oft contracted wind and rain.
  CHOR. But this another kind of tempest brings.
  SAM. Be less abstruse; my riddlingdays are past.
  CHOR. Look now for no inchanting voice, nor fear
The bait of honied words; a rougher tongue
Draws hitherward, I know him by his stride,
The giant Harapha of Gath; his look
Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.
Comes he in peace? what wind hath blown him hither

I less conjecture than when first I saw
The sumptuous Dalilah floting this way:
His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.
  Sam. Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.
  Chor. His fraught we soon shall know; he now arrives.
  Har. I come not, Samson, to condole thy chance,
As these perhaps, yet wish it had not been,
Though for no friendly intent. I am of Gath,
Men call me Harapha, of stock renown'd
As Og or Anak and the Emmims old
That Kiriathaim held; thou know'st me now
If thou at all art known. Much I have heard
Of thy prodigious might and feats perform'd
Incredible to me, in this displeas'd,
That I was never present on the place
Of those encounters, where we might have try'd
Each other's force in camp or listed field;
And now am come to see of whom such noise
Hath walk'd about, and each limb to survey,
If thy appearance answer loud report.
  Sam. The way to know were not to see but taste.
  Har. Dost thou already single me? I thought
Gyves and the mill had tam'd thee. O that Fortune
Had brought me to the field, where thou art fam'd
To have wrought such wonders with an ass's jaw;
I should have forc'd thee soon with other arms,
Or left thy carcase where the ass lay thrown:
So had the glory of prowess been recover'd
To Palestine, won by a Philistine,
From the unforeskinn'd race, of whom thou bear'st
The highest name for valiant acts; that honour
Certain to have won by mortal duel from thee,
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.
  Sam. Boast not of what thou would'st have done, but do
What then thou would'st, thou seest it in thy hand.
  Har. To combat with a blind man I disdain,
And thou hast need much washing to be touch'd.
  Sam. Such usage as your honourable lords
Afford me assassinated and betray'd,

Who durst not with their whole united powers
In fight withstand me single and unarm'd,
Nor in the house with chamber ambushes
Close-banded durst attack me, no not sleeping,
Till they had hir'd a woman with their gold,
Breaking her marriage faith to circumvent me.
Therefore without feign'd shifts let be assign'd
Some narrow place enclos'd, where sight may give thee,
Or rather flight, no great advantage on me;
Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy helmet
And brigandine of brass, thy broad habergeon,
Vaunt-brass and greves, and gauntler, add thy spear,
A weaver's beam, and seven-times-folded shield;
I only with an oaken staff will meet thee,
And raise such outcries on thy clatter'd iron,
Which long shall not withhold from me thy head,
That in a little time while breath remains thee,
Thou oft shalt wish thyself at Gath to boast
Again in safety what thou would'st have done
To Samson, but shalt never see Gath more.
HAR. Thou durst not thus disparage glorious arms,
Which greatest heroes have in battle worn,
Their ornament and safety, had not spells
And black inchantments, some Magician's art,
Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong, which thou from Heav'n
Feign'dst at thy birth was giv'n thee in thy hair,
Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs
Were bristles rang'd like those that ridge the back
Of chaf'd wild boars, or ruffled porcupines.
SAM. I know no spells, use no forbidden arts;
My trust is in the living God, who gave me
At my nativity this strength, diffus'd
No less through all my sinews, joints and bones,
Than thine, while I preserv'd these locks unshorn,
The pledge of my unviolated vow.
For proof hereof, if Dagon be thy god,
Go to his temple, invocate his aid
With solemn'st devotion, spread before him
How highly it concerns his glory now
To frustrate and dissolve these magic spells,

Which I to be the power of Israel's God
Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,
Offering to combat thee his champion bold,
With th' utmost of his godhead seconded:
Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy sorrow
Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mine.
  Har. Presume not on thy God, whate'er he be;
Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off
Quite from his people, and deliver'd up
Into thy enemy's hand, permitted them
To put out both thine eyes, and fetter'd send thee
Into the common prison, there to grind
Among the slaves and asses thy comrades,
As good for nothing else, no better service
With those thy boist'rous locks, no worthy match
For valour to assail, not by the sword
Of noble warrior, so to stain his honour,
But by the barber's razor best subdued.
  Sam. All these indignities, for such they are
From thine, these evils I deserve, and more,
Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon,
Whose ear is ever open, and his eye
Gracious to re-admit the suppliant:
In confidence whereof I once again
Defy thee to the trial of mortal fight,
By combat to decide whose god is God,
Thine, or whom I with Israel's sons adore.
  Har. Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in trusting
He will accept thee to defend his cause,
A murderer, a revolter, and a robber.
  Sam. Tongue-doughty Giant, how dost thou prove me these?
  Har. Is not thy nation subject to our lords?
Their magistrates confess'd it, when they took thee
As a league-breaker and deliver'd bound
Into our hands: for hadst thou not committed
Notorious murder on those thirty men
At Ascalon, who never did thee harm,
Then like a robber stripp'dst them of their robes?
The Philistines, when thou hadst broke the league,

Went up with armed powers thee only seeking,
To others did no violence, nor spoil.
SAM. Among the daughters of the Philistines
I chose a wife, which argued me no foe;
And in your city held my nuptial feast:
But your ill-meaning politician lords,
Under pretence of bridal friends and guests,
Appointed to await me thirty spies,
Who, threat'ning cruel death, constrain'd the bride
To wring from me, and tell to them my secret,
That solv'd the riddle which I had propos'd.
When I perceiv'd all set on enmity,
As on my enemies, wherever chanc'd,
I us'd hostility, and took their spoil
To pay my underminers in their coin;
My nation was subjected to your lords.
It was the force of conquest; force with force
Is well ejected when the conquer'd can.
But I a private person, whom my country
As a league-breaker gave up bound, presum'd
Single rebellion, and did hostile acts.
I was no private, but a person rais'd
With strength sufficient and command from Heav'n,
To free my country; if their servile minds
Me their deliverer sent would not receive,
But to their masters gave me up for nought,
Th' unworthier they; whence to this day they serve.
I was to do my part from Heav'n assign'd,
And had perform'd it, if my known offence
Had not disabled me, not all your force:
These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant,
Though by his blindness maim'd for high attempts,
Who now defies thee thrice to single fight,
As a petty enterprize of small enforce.
HAR. With thee a man condemn'd, a slave enroll'd,
Due by the law to capital punishment;
To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.
SAM. Cam'st thou for this, vain boaster, to survey
me,
To descant on my strength, and give thy verdict?
Come nearer, part not hence so slight inform'd;

But take good heed my hand survey not thee.
HAR. O Baal-zebub! can my ears unus'd
Hear these dishonours, and not render death?
SAM. No man withholds thee, nothing from thy hand
Fear I incurable; bring up thy van;
My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free.
HAR. This insolence other kind of answer fits.
SAM. Go baffled coward, lest I run upon thee
Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,
And with one buffet lay thy structure low,
Or swing thee in the air, then dash thee down
To th' hazard of thy brains and shatter'd sides.
HAR. By Astaroth, e'er long thou shalt lament
These braveries in irons loaden on thee.
CHOR. His Giantship is gone somewhat crest fall'n,
Stalking with less unconscionable strides,
And lower looks, but in a sultry chafe.
SAM. I dread him not, nor all his giant-brood,
Though Fame divulge him father of five sons,
All of gigantic size, Goliath chief.
CHOR. He will directly to the lords, I fear,
And with malicious counsel stir them up
Some way or other yet further to afflict thee.
SAM. He must allege some cause, and offer'd fight
Will not dare mention, lest a question rise
Whether he durst accept th' offer or not;
And that he durst not, plain enough appear'd.
Much more affliction than already felt
They cannot well impose, nor I sustain,
If they intend advantage of my labours,
The work of many hands, which earns my keeping
With no small profit daily to my owners.
But come what will, my deadliest foe will prove
My speediest friend, by death to rid me hence,
The worst that he can give, to me the best.
Yet so it may fall out, because their end
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine
Draw their own ruin who attempt the deed.
CHOR. O how comely it is, and how reviving
To the spirits of just men long oppress'd,

When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the earth, th' oppressor,
The brute and boist'rous force of violent men
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous and all such as honour truth;
He all their ammunition
And feats of war defeats,
With plain heroic magnitude of mind
And celestial vigour arm'd,
Their armories and magazines contemns,
Renders them useless, while,
With winged expedition,
Swift as the lightning glance he executes
His errand on the wicked, who surpris'd
Lose their defence, distracted and amaz'd.
  But patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,
And victor over all
That Tyranny of Fortune can inflict.
Either of these is in thy lot,
Samson, with might endued
Above the sons of men; but sight bereav'd
May chance to number thee with those
Whom patience finally must crown.
  This idol's day hath been to thee no day of rest,
Labouring thy mind
More than the working day thy hands.
And yet perhaps more trouble is behind,
For I descry this way
Some other tending, in his hand
A sceptre or quaint staff he bears,
Comes on amain, speed in his look.
By his habit I discern him now
A public officer, and now at hand.
His message will be short and voluble.
  OF. Hebrews, the pris'ner Samson here I seek.
  CHOR. His manacles remark him, there he sits.
  OF. Samson, to thee our lords thus bid me say;

This day to Dagon is a solemn feast,
With sacrifices, triumph, pomp, and games;
Thy strength they know surpassing human rate,
And now some public proof thereof require
To honour this great feast, and great assembly;
Rise therefore with all speed and come along,
Where I will see thee hearten'd and fresh clad
To appear as fits before th' illustrious lords.
Sam. Thou know'st I am an Hebrew, therefore tell them
Our law forbids at their religious rites
My presence; for that cause I cannot come.
Of. This answer, be assur'd will not content them.
Sam. Have they not sword-players, and every sort
Of gymnic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,
Jugglers and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics,
But they must pick me out with shackles tir'd,
And over-labour'd at their public mill
To make them sport with blind activity?
Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels
On my refusal to distress me more,
Or make a game of my calamities?
Return the way thou cam'st; I will not come.
Of. Regard thyself; this will offend them highly.
Sam. Myself? my conscience and internal peace.
Can they think me so broken, so debas'd
With corporal servitude, that my mind ever
Will condescend to such absurd commands;
Although their drudge, to be their fool or jester,
And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief
To shew them feats, and play before their god,
The worst of all indignities, yet on me
Join'd with extreme contempt? I will not come.
Of. My message was impos'd on me with speed,
Brooks no delay: is this thy resolution?
Sam. So take it with what speed thy message needs.
Of. I am sorry what this stoutness will produce.
Sam. Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow indeed.
Chor. Consider, Samson, matters now are strain'd
Up to the height, whether to hold or break;
He's gone, and who knows how he may report

Thy words, by adding fuel to the flame?
Expect another message more imperious,
More lordly thund'ring than thou well wilt bear.
SAM. Shall I abuse this consecrated gift
Of strength, again returning with my hair
After my great transgression, so requite
Favour renew'd, and add a greater sin
By prostituting holy things to idols;
A Nazarite in place abominable,
Vaunting my strength in honour to their Dagon?
Besides, how vile, contemptible, ridiculous,
What act more execrably unclean, profane?
CHOR. Yet with this strength thou serv'st the Philistines,
Idolaters, uncircumcis'd, unclean.
SAM. Not in their idol-worship, but by labour
Honest and lawful to deserve my food
Of those who have me in their civil power.
CHOR. Where the heart joins not, outward acts defile not.
SAM. Where outward force constrains, the sentence holds;
But who constrains me to the temple of Dagon,
Not dragging? the Philistian lords command.
Commands are no constraints. If I obey them,
I do it freely, vent'ring to displease
God for the fear of man, and man prefer,
Set God behind: which in his jealousy
Shall never unrepented, find forgiveness.
Yet that he may dispense with me or thee
Present in temples at idolatrous rites
For some important cause, thou need'st not doubt.
CHOR. How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach.
SAM. Be of good courage; I begin to feel
Some rousing motions in me, which dispose
To something extraordinary my thoughts.
I with this messenger will go along,
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour
Our law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.
If there be aught of presage in the mind,

This day will be remarkable in my life
By some great act, or of my days the last.
  Chor. In time thou hast resolv'd; the man returns.
  Of. Samson, this second message from our lords
To thee I am bid say. Art thou our slave,
Our captive, at the public mill our drudge,
And dar'st thou at our sending and command
Dispute thy coming? come without delay;
Or we shall find such engines to assail
And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of force,
Though thou wert firmlier fasten'd than a rock.
  Sam. I could be well content to try their art,
Which to no few of them would prove pernicious.
Yet knowing their advantages too many,
Because they shall not trail me through their streets
Like a wild beast, I am content to go.
Masters' commands come with a power retistless
To such as owe them absolute subjection;
And for a life who will not change his purpose?
(So mutable are all the ways of men)
Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply
Scandalous, or forbidden in our law.
  Of. I praise thy resolution: doff these links;
By this compliance thou wilt win the lords
To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.
  Sam. Brethren farewel; your company along
I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them
To see me girt with friends; and how the sight
Of me as of a common enemy,
So dreaded once, may now exasperate them,
I know not: lords are lordliest in their wine;
And the well-feasted priest then soonest fir'd
With zeal, if aught religion seem'd concern'd;
No less the people on their holy-days
Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable:
Happen what may, of me expect to hear
Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy
Our God, our law, my nation, or myself,
The last of me or no I cannot warrant.
  Chor. Go, and the Holy One
Of Israel be thy guide
To what may serve his glory best, and spread his name

Great among the Heathen round;
Send thee the angel of thy birth, to stand
Fast by thy side, who from thy father's field
Rode up in flames, after his message told
Of thy conception, and be now a shield
Of fire; that Spirit that first rush'd on thee
In the camp of Dan
Be efficacious in thee now at need,
For never was from Heav'n imparted
Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,
As in thy wondrous actions hath been seen.
But wherefore comes old Manoah in such haste,
With youthful steps? much livelier than erewhile
He seems: supposing here to find his son,
Or of him bringing to us some glad news?
MAN. Peace with you, brethren; my inducement hither
Was not at present here to find my son,
By order of the lords new parted hence
To come and play before them at their feast.
I heard all as I came; the city rings,
And numbers thither flock; I had no will,
Lest I should see him forc'd to things unseemly.
But that which mov'd my coming now was chiefly
To give ye part with me what hope I have
With good success to work his liberty.
CHOR. That hope would much rejoice us to partake
With thee: say, reverend Sire; we thirst to hear.
MAN. I have attempted one by one the Lords,
Either at home or through the high street passing,
With supplication prone, and father's tears,
To accept of ransom for my son, their pris'ner.
Some much averse I found, and wondrous harsh,
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;
That part most reverenc'd Dagon and his priest;
Others more moderate seeming, but their aim
Private reward, for which both God and state
They easily would set to sale: a third,
More generous far and civil, who confess'd
They had enough reveng'd, having reduc'd
Their foe to misery beneath their fears,

The rest was magnamity to remit,
If some convenient ransom were propos'd.
What noise or shout was that? it tore the sky.
  Chor. Doubtless the people shouting to behold
Their once great dread, captive and blind before them,
Or at some proof of strength before them shewn.
  Man. His ransom, if my whole inheritance
May compass it, shall willingly be paid
And number'd down: much rather I shall choose
To live the poorest in my tribe, than richest,
And he in that calamitous prison left.
No, I am fix'd not to part hence without him.
For his redemption all my patrimony,
If need be, I am ready to forego
And quit: not wanting him, I shall want nothing.
  Chor. Fathers are wont to lay up for their sons,
Thou for thy son are bent to lay out all:
Sons wont to nurse their parents in old age,
Thou in old age car'st how to nurse thy son,
Made older than thy age through eye-sight lost.
  Man. It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,
And view him sitting in the house, ennobled
With all those high exploits by him achiev'd,
And on his shoulders waving down those locks,
That of a nation arm'd the strength contain'd:
And I persuade me God had not permitted
His strength again to grow up with his hair
Garrison'd round about him like a camp
Of faithful soldiery, were not his purpose
To use him further yet in some great service,
Not to sit idle with so great a gift
Useless, and thence ridiculous about him.
And since his strength with eye-sight was not lost,
God will restore him eye-sight to his strength.
  Chor. Thy hopes are not ill founded, nor seem vain,
Of his delivery, and the joy thereon
Conceiv'd, agreeable to a father's love,
In both which we, as next, participate.
  Man. I know your friendly minds, and—O what noise!
Mercy of Heav'n, what hideous noise was that!
Horribly loud, unlike the former shout.

Chor. Noise call you it, or universal groan,
As if the whole inhabitation perish'd!
Blood, death, and deathful deeds, are in that noise,
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.
Man. Of ruin indeed, methought I heard the noise:
Oh it continues; they have slain my son.
Chor. Thy son is rather slaying them, that outcry
From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.
Man. Some dismal accident it needs must be;
What shall we do, stay here or run and see?
Chor. Best keep together here, lest running thither
We unawares run into Danger's mouth.
This evil on the Philistines is fall'n;
From whom could else a general cry be heard?
The sufferer's then will scarce molest us here,
From other hands we need not much to fear.
What if his eye-sight (for to Israel's God
Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,
He now be dealing dole among his foes,
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way?
Man. That were a joy presumptuous to be thought.
Chor. Yet God hath wrought things as incredible,
For his people of old; what hinders now?
Man. He can I know, but doubt to think he will;
Yet hope would fain subscribe, and tempts belief.
A little stay will bring some notice hither.
Chor. Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner;
For evil news rides post, while good news baits,
And to our wish I see one hither speeding,
An Hebrew, as I guess, and of our tribe.
Mes. O whither shall I run, or which way fly
The sight of this so horrid spectacle,
Which erst my eyes beheld, and yet behold?
For dire imagination still pursues me.
But Providence or instinct of nature seems,
Or reason though disturb'd, and scarce consulted,
To have guided me aright, I know not how,
To thee first reverend Manoah, and to these
My countrymen, whom here I knew remaining,
As at some distance from the place of horror,
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

Man. The accident was loud, and here before thee
With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not;
No preface needs, thou sees't we long to know.
Mes. It would burst forth, but I recover breath
nd sense distract, to know well what I utter.
Man. Tell us the sum; the circumstance defer.
Mes. Gaza yet stands, but all her sons are fall'n,
All in a moment overwhelm'd and fall'n.
Man. Sad; but thou know'st to Israelites not saddest,
The desolation of a hostile city.
Mes. Feed on that first, there may in grief be surfeit.
Man. Relate by whom.
Mes. By Samson.
Man. That still lessens
The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.
Mes. Ah, Manoah, I refrain too suddenly
To utter what will come at last too soon;
Lest evil tidings with too rude irruption
Hitting thy aged ear should pierce too deep.
Man. Suspense in news is torture; speak them out.
Mes. Take then the worst in brief; Samson is dead.
Man. The worst indeed, O all my hopes defeated
To free him hence! but Death, who sets all free,
Hath paid his ransom now, and full discharge.
What windy joy this day had I conceiv'd,
Hopeful of his delivery, which now proves
Abortive as the first born bloom of Spring
Nipt with the lagging rear of Winter's frost!
Yet e'er I give the reins to grief, say first
How dy'd he? death to life is crown or shame.
All by him fell thou say'st; by whom fell he?
What glorious hand gave Samson his death's wound?
Mes. Unwounded of his enemies he fell.
Man. Weared with slaughter then, or how? explain.
Mes. By his own hands.
Man. Self-violence? what cause
Brought him so soon at variance with himself,
Among his foes?
Mes. Inevitable cause

At once both to destroy and be destroy'd;
The edifice, where all were met to see him,
Upon their heads, and on his own he pull'd.
MAN. O lastly overstrong against thyself!
A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge.
More than enough we know; but while things yet
Are in confusion, give us, if thou canst,
Eye-witness of what first or last was done,
Relation more particular and distinct.
MES. Occasions drew me early to this city;
And as the gates I enter'd with sun-rise,
The morning trumpets festival proclaim'd
Through each high-street; little I had dispatch'd,
When all abroad was rumour'd that this day
Samson should be brought forth to shew the people
Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games.
I sorrow'd at his captive state, but minded
Not to be absent at that spectacle.
The building was a spacious theatre,
Half-round, on two main pillars vaulted high,
With seats, where all the lords, and each degree
Of sort might sit in order to behold;
The other side was open, where the throng
On banks and scaffolds under sky might stand;
I among these aloof obscurely stood.
The feast and noon grew high, and sacrifice
Had fill'd their hearts with mirth, high cheer, and wine,
When to their sports they turn'd. Immediately
Was Samson as a public servant brought,
In their state livery clad; before him pipes
And timbrels, on each side went armed guards,
Both horse and foot, before him and behind
Archers, and slingers, cataphracts and spears.
At sight of him the people with a shout
Rifted the air, clamouring their god with praise,
Who had made their dreadful enemy their thrall.
He patient, but undaunted where they led him,
Came to the place, and what was set before him,
Which without help of eye might be assay'd
To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still perform'd

All with incredible, stupendous force,
None daring to appear antagonist.
At length for intermission sake they led him
Between the pillars, he his guide requested
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard)
As overtir'd to let him lean a while
With both his arms on those two massy pillars,
That to the arched roof gave main support.
He unsuspicious led him; which when Samson
Felt in his arms, with head awhile inclin'd,
And eyes fast fix'd he stood, as one who pray'd,
Or some greater matter in his mind revolv'd:
At last with head erect thus cry'd aloud,
Hitherto, Lords, what your commands impos'd
I have perform'd, as reason was obeying,
Not without wonder or delight beheld:
Now of my own accord such other trial
I mean to shew you of my strength, yet greater,
As with amaze shall strike all who behold.
This utter'd, straining all his nerves he bow'd,
As with the force of winds and waters pent,
When mountains tremble; those two massy pillars,
With horrible convulsions, to and fro
He tugg'd, he shook, till down they came, and
Drew the whole roof after them, with burst of thunder,
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath;
Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,
Their choice nobility, and flower, not only
Of this but each Philistian city round,
Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.
Samson with these immix'd, inevitably
Pull'd down the same destruction on himself;
The vulgar only scap'd who stood without.
Chor. O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!
Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd
The work for which thou wast foretold
To Israel, and now ly'st victorious
Among thy slain, self-kill'd,
Not willingly, but tangled in the fold
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd

Thee with thy slaughter'd foes in number more sublime,
Than all thy life hath slain before.
1. SEMICHOR. While their hearts were jocund, and
Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine,
And fat regorg'd of bulls and goats,
Chaunting their idol, and preferring
Before our living dread, who dwells
In Silo, his bright sanctuary:
Among them he a sp'rit of phrenzy sent,
Who hurt their minds,
And urg'd them on with mad desire
To call in haste for their destroyer;
They, only set on sport and play,
Unweetingly importun'd
Their own destruction to come speedy upon them.
So fond are mortal men
Fall'n into wrath divine,
As their own ruin on themselves to invite,
Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,
And with blindness internal struck.
2. SEMICHOR. But he, though blind of sight,
Despis'd, and thought extinguish'd quite,
With inward eyes illuminated,
His fiery virtue rous'd
From under ashes into sudden flame,
And as an evening dragon came,
Assailant on the perched roosts,
And nests in order rang'd
Of tame villatic fowl; but as an eagle
His cloudless thunder bolted on their heads.
So virtue giv'n for lost,
Depress'd, and overthrown, as seem'd,
Like that self-begotten bird,
In the Arabian woods imbost,
That no second knows nor third,
And lay erewhile a holocaust,
From out her ashy womb now teem'd,
Revives, reflourishes, then vigorous most
When most unactive deem'd,
And though her body die, her fame survives
A secular bird ages of lives.

Man. Come, come, no time for lamentation now,
Nor much more cause; Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroicly hath finish'd
A life heroic; on his enemies
Fully reveng'd, hath left them years of mourning,
And lamentation to the Sons of Caphtor
Through all Philistian bounds, to Israel
Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them
Find courage to lay hold on this occasion;
To' himself and father's house eternal fame,
And which is best and happiest yet, all this
With God not parted from him, as was fear'd.
But favouring and assisting to the end,
Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise or blame, nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.
Let us go find the body where it lies
Soak'd in his enemies' blood, and from the stream
With lavers pure, and cleansing herbs wash off
The clotted gore. I with what speed the while
(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)
Will send for all my kindred, all my friends,
To fetch him hence, and solemnly attend
With silent obsequy, and funeral train,
Home to his father's house: there will I build him
A monument, and plant it round with shade
Of laurel ever green, and branching palm,
With all his trophies hung, and acts inroll'd
In copious legend, or sweet lyric song.
Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,
And from his memory inflame their breasts
To matchless valour, and adventures high:
The virgins also shall on feastful days
Visit his tomb with flow'rs, only bewailing
His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,
From whence captivity and loss of eyes.

Chor. All is best, though we oft doubt
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest Wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.

Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns,
And to his faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns,
And all that band them to resist
His uncontrollable intent;
His servants he with new acquist
Of true experience from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismist,
And calm of mind all passions spent.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

ERRATUM.

P. 320, l. 3. In some copies, for *not sin*, read *of sin.*

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The cabinet of poetry

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